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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented and evaluated a program for improving social development of elementary school students in order to lessen disruptive behavior in physical education class. The targeted population consisted of elementary school children in second, fourth, and fifth grades in a growing rural, middle class community. Anecdotal records that documented disruptive social behaviors, teacher observation checklists, and assessments of appropriate social behavior evidenced the problem. A review of solution strategies suggested that direct instruction of social skills--such as listening, keeping hands to self, being courteous, encouraging others--and implementation of cooperative group practices were effective in improving those skills. Cooperative learning was the intervention used to develop skills such as compromising, accepting differences, staying with the group, and using encouraging words. Post intervention data indicated the major gains were in the areas of social awareness, listening, encouraging others, practicing social skills, and cooperative group activities. The data indicated that daily physical education in which social skills were practiced was probably necessary to influence the development of selected social skills. Direct instruction of selected social skills may have been helpful in increasing the desired behavior of the students studied. (Four appendices include a student survey, checklists, and teacher journal entries. Contains 58 references.) (Author/SD)

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IMPROVING SOCIAL SKILLS AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND DIRECT INSTRUCTION

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight
Field-Based Master's Program
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Title: Improving social skills at the elementary level through cooperative learning and direct instruction

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Date: November 28, 2001

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving social development of elementary school students in order to lessen disruptive behavior in physical education class. The targeted population consisted of elementary school children in second, fourth, and fifth grades in a growing rural, middle class community. Anecdotal records that documented disruptive social behaviors, teacher observation checklists, and assessments of appropriate social behavior evidenced the problem.

Analysis of the probable cause data revealed that students' appropriate use of social skills had declined. Many students were not taught social skills in the home. Both parents working outside the home may have limited the amount of time spent on modeling proper social behaviors. Daily and consistent direct instruction of social skills in various aspects of student life were often not present. Students with low self-esteem tended to cause disruptive behavior because of inappropriate social skills in the classroom.

A review of solution strategies suggested that direct instruction of social skills, such as listening, keeping hands to self, courtesy, encouraging others, and implementing cooperative group practices were effective in improving those skills. Cooperative learning was the intervention used to develop skills such as compromising, acceptance of differences, staying with the group, and using encouraging words.

Post intervention data indicated the major gains were in the area of social awareness, listening, encouraging others, practicing social skills and cooperative group activities. The data indicated that daily physical education in which social skills were practiced, was probably necessary to influence the development of selected social skills. Direct instruction of selected social skills may have been helpful in increasing the desired behavior of the students studied.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT..... ...1

General Statement of the Problem.....1

Immediate Problem Context.....1

Community Context.....7

National Context of the Problem.....10

CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION.....12

Problem Evidence..... 12

Probable Causes.....21

CHAPTER 3 – THE SOLUTION STRATEGY.....27

Literature Review.....27

Project Objectives and Processes.....47

Project Action Plan.....48

Methods of Assessment.....49

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT RESULTS.....51

Historical Description of the Intervention.....51

Presentation and Analysis of Results.....63

Conclusions and Recommendations.....76

REFERENCES.....79

APPENDIX A: Student Survey.....84

APPENDIX B: Teacher Observation Checklist.....85

APPENDIX C: Teacher Journal Entries.....86

APPENDIX D: Cooperative Group Skills Checklist.....87

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted first through sixth grade physical education classes in two small northern Illinois communities exhibited a lack of appropriate social skills that caused disruptive behavior in physical education classes and interfered with their interpersonal growth as well as with the total amount of time they spent on productive learning. Evidence for the existence of the problem included anecdotal records that documented disruptive behavior, teacher observation checklists that described student behavior, and assessments that indicated the level of appropriate social behavior.

Immediate Problem Context

Three schools were targeted for use in the social skills research project. Grade two was used from school A, grade four from school B and grade five from school C. Although the three schools were similar in geographic location, they varied in faculty make-up and student characteristics.

School A

School A, one of the targeted schools that participated in the social skills research project, was a pre-K through third grade building. The building was originally a first

grade only building with five classrooms. In the early 1990's two mobile classrooms were added to house the increased enrollment, and in 2000 a large addition was added. The new addition included a gym, learning center, computer lab, cafeteria, and 25 more classrooms. Along with the expansion of the building came the expansion of the grades housed there. The school went from a one-grade-level building to a four grade level building.

School A had an experienced, well-educated faculty. The average teacher's experience was 17.3 years, with 37.6% holding bachelor's degrees and 61.6% holding master's degrees. The pupil/teacher ratio was 20:1 and the pupil certified staff ratio was 16:1. The pupil/administrator ratio was 260:1. Average salaries in School A were $46,158. Each first grade classroom had a half-time aide to assist the classroom teachers. The school had two Reading Recovery teachers, one art and music teacher, one physical education teacher, one learning center director, two LD teachers, one social worker, one pre-K teacher, seven kindergarten teachers, eight first grade teachers, and seven second grade teachers.

The student enrollment of School A was 541 students. Approximately 97% of the student body was White. Only 5.3% of the students were from low-income families. All of the students in School A spoke English as their primary language. The attendance rate at School A was 96%, with mobility at 8% and chronic truancy at .6%. All of the grade levels had relatively small class sizes with kindergarten around 20 students per class, first grade around 18 per class, and second grade around 25 per class.

The curriculum of School A was varied and comprehensive. Time was spent teaching the core subjects of math, science, English, social studies, and reading. All of

the first and second graders received daily physical education, and kindergarteners received physical education once a week. Students were scheduled into the learning center once a week for classroom activities, as well as weekly lessons in the computer lab. All of the students received art and music instruction weekly. To assist with the reading program at the first grade level were two Reading Recovery teachers to work with at-risk students. There was a half-day pre-K program and a half-day kindergarten program. Special education services were delivered to the identified students in a regular classroom setting, with some students being pulled out for speech, physical therapy, or occupational therapy. In addition to the regular curriculum, there were assemblies to enhance certain units of study as well as educational field trips and attendance at live performances.

There were many factors that made School A a very unique school. The small class sizes helped the students and teachers to get to know each other very well. There was a philosophy in the school that all teachers were responsible for all of the students whether they were in their classrooms or not. Because of this philosophy the teachers made an effort to get to know many of the students in the building. The teachers were close to one another and worked well together. For the most part the parents of the students in School A were involved in their children's education as was evidenced by the fact that 100% of the parents or guardians had personal contact with school staff during the school year. The community showed its support of the school district by passing a referendum for several new additions during the summer of 2000. Since School A was in a unit district, most of the students that started out in kindergarten stayed together all through their school years and graduated from high school as a group. This made for a

close-knit group, not only among the students but also among the parents and teachers. Many of the teachers in the district had children in the district, which helped them to see issues from both sides. The mobility rate was very low for students in this school. Many of the teachers in this school had children of parents who were students at one time in their classes.

Some major issues facing School A were issues dealing with growth. The school grew from a very small one grade level building to a four grade level building. That took a great deal of adjustment on everyone's part. Curriculum needed to be adjusted, staff needed to be combined, and programs needed to be coordinated. The scheduling for all of this was a huge undertaking. In addition to the expansion of the school building, the surrounding community was also growing rapidly with two new subdivisions being built adjacent to the school. Even though the community had been supportive in referendums, there was not enough money to do everything that needed to be done.

School B

School B was an elementary kindergarten through fifth grade building. The school had 24 classrooms, a music room, an art room, a gymnasium, a multi-media learning center, and a multi-purpose room. The school was originally built in 1960 with 14 classrooms. Additions were built in 1970 and 1979 to bring the school to its existing capacity.

The average teaching experience for teachers in School B was 11.4 years. Approximately 49% of the teachers held a bachelor's degree and 51% held a master's degree. Eleven percent of the teachers were male, and 89% were female. The pupil

teacher ratio was 21:1 and the pupil certified staff ratio was 16:1. The pupil administrator ratio was 278:1. Average teacher's salary for school B was about $38,000.

The student enrollment of School B was 616 students with a racial ethnic background consisting of the following: 90% White, 7% Hispanic, and 3% other minorities. There was 10.2% of the student population from low-income families, and 3.2% of the enrollment whose primary language was not English. The attendance rate at School B was 95.4% daily attendance with a mobility rate of 15.4%, and there was no chronic truancy. The average class size ranged from 24-28 students.

The school curriculum consisted of the core subjects of mathematics, science, English, and social science. There was also music, art, physical education, and computer instruction. School B had special programs for gifted students as well as a Reading Recovery program and a primary instruction program. Fine arts assembly programs and field trips were also used to complement the curriculum. School B had a full time social worker, a part time psychologist, learning disability teachers, an ESL teacher, and six classroom teacher assistants to help meet the needs of all students. School B housed two classrooms of countywide special education students who were physically and mentally challenged. Some of these students were mainstreamed into regular classrooms for particular subjects.

The parent group of School B was active and involved. The parent group funded some of the assembly programs, made purchases for the playground, and gave a monetary allowance to teachers to purchase items for their classrooms that were not covered by the school budget. The parent group also hosted social activities during the

year to give families a chance to connect with other families. Examples of these activities were the beginning of the school picnic, the millennium party, and the fun fair.

School B had the highest percentage of low-income, minority students in its district. Because School B also had the lowest results in the standardized tests there was some thought that School B's percentage of low-income, minority students could be a contributing factor to the low test scores.

School C

School C was a fifth through eighth grade building. The building was divided into two wings. The south wing housed seventh and eight grades, and the north wing housed the fifth and sixth grades. The facility had recently been renovated to join the junior high and middle school grades into one complex.

The professional staff had an average of 17.3 years experience in teaching. In professional education 37.6 % of the staff had bachelor's degrees , and 61.6% had master's degrees or above. The average teacher's salary for the unit district was $46,158. The pupil/ teacher ratio was 20:1, and the pupil certified staff ratio was 16 :1. The teachers' racial background and gender were 100% White with 29.8% male and 70.2% female.

The total student enrollment in the four grades was approximately 960. The student population was around 97% white. The student attendance rate was approximately 96% of all school days. There were no chronic truants. The average class size was 28 students. There was a very low number of low income (6.9%) or limited English speaking (0.7 %) students.

The curriculum and programs offered to students were many. The time

devoted to teaching core subjects of mathematics, science, English, and social studies was 47 minutes per period. Special programs with professional staff members included daily physical education, regularly scheduled music, library, computers, assembly programs, and field trips. There was an accelerated student program beginning in second grade and continuing to eighth grade. There was an intervention program for special students' needs including social services, social worker, psychologist, and other professional services. Special needs students were mainstreamed into the general population of the school. There were many extra-curricular sports and activities available for students.

The school was unique because it was in a relatively small rural district where teachers, students, and families knew each other personally. Many of the teachers and many generations of families tended to live, work, and remain in the area. People in the school district tended to be open minded , allowing teachers to be innovative and creative, and to change with the times .

An issue was the reorganization of the elementary grade levels. One grade from each elementary building was moved to another building. Each building in the district was under some sort of reconstruction or addition. Changes in buildings, staff, administration, office staff, philosophy, and curriculum caused problems that were usually associated with change such as stress, overwork, and feelings of insecurity.

Community Context

Community A and C

Schools A and C were in a unit district located in rural Northern Illinois just south of the Wisconsin-Illinois border. The district included four separate schools. The

primary school housed pre-K through second grade, the middle school third through fourth grade, the junior high school fifth through eight grade, and the high school ninth through twelfth grade.

Many recreational areas surrounded the community, including rivers, lakes, and state parks. Although there was no park district located in the community, there were many different sports organizations available to the children. Soccer, football, baseball, and softball were very popular activities that were supported and run by volunteers.

The community's first official census was completed in November 1991. It indicated that the population was 4,631 and the number of housing units was 1,650. Since there was very little industry in the community, most of the population worked outside of the community or farmed the land. The community was predominantly German Catholic in make-up.

The first recorded settlers arrived in this community in 1841. They were farmers who emigrated from Germany. Many of their descendents farmed and resided in the area. The community annually celebrated its German heritage with Saufen Und Spiel activities. Also strong evidence of the German ties could be seen in the German Gothic Catholic Church which sat on a hill in the center of town and could be seen for miles.

For the past 150 years the community was primarily a farming community. At the time of this writing, however, farms were being sold to developers to build homes. This rapid influx of population put a strain on the school system. Even though the community supported referendums in the past, there was not enough industry to share the financial burden.

Community B

School B was in an elementary district that consisted of 11 schools in a suburban rural area in Northeastern Illinois. Eight kindergarten through fifth grade elementary schools and three sixth through eighth grade middle schools comprised the district. The targeted community had a population of about 35,000 people and was located 50 miles from a major metropolitan area. This community was in one of the fastest growing counties in the country, and was experiencing major residential and commercial growth. The targeted area was the retail, commercial, industrial, and business hub of the county in which it was located.

The targeted community households numbered 19,635 people with a population that was approximately 93% White and 7% minority. The community was home to four major area employers, and the residents had easy access to major highways, railways, and airports. Unemployment was very low. The work force was predominantly white collar with many commuters traveling into the major city and to other nearby suburban areas. The median selling price for a home was $192,000.

Sports and recreation were definitely a focus for the children and families living in the targeted area. An active Chamber of Commerce, Park District, and YMCA provided over 400 recreational programs including a lake with two public beaches, golf courses, parks, soccer fields, softball and baseball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, bike and hiking paths, and nature areas that were available to all residents. In addition, private sports centers for fitness, ice-skating, volleyball, basketball, soccer, and roller-skating added to the many opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in social and recreational activities.

Opportunities for the residents to experience the cultural and performing arts was available through local dance companies, choral groups, youth and community orchestras, and community theatre groups. Special programs were offered throughout the year for professional sculptors, potters, and crafters to present their works. The close proximity of a major city and a commuter train line created a unique opportunity for residents to be able to take advantage of and experience all the culture that a major city has to offer.

Residential growth and all its challenges were the major problems facing this targeted community, and especially its effects on the schools. Most of the schools in the targeted district were at full capacity, and a referendum had been passed for a new elementary school. School B received six additional classrooms and a multipurpose room as a result of the referendum.

National Context of the Problem

There is a need for teaching interpersonal skills within the educational setting. Success in life ultimately comes down to the ability to get along with others, work cooperatively, and support each other. Isolated skills in specific subject areas will not prepare today's students for a productive life. Fogarty (1997) stated that, "The number one reason people fail at their jobs is because of a lack of social adeptness. They can't get along with their coworkers"(p.112). Fogarty and Bellanca (1992) explained that interpersonal skill development is the trend toward which society is shifting.

Learning to cooperate with peers is critical to school success. Educators must prepare their students to respond in new and different ways. With the adjustments students must make in order to adapt to their ever-changing environment, they need to

learn how to form friendships quickly, bond to stable forces, and learn collaboration skills (Fogarty & Bellanca, 1992).

Tyler, as sited in Costa and Bellanca, noted the profound changes that have taken place in education since the beginning of the 20th Century. They stated that the curriculum of the school should no longer focus only on the learning of facts and specific subject matter, but also on the development of solving social problems and developing flexible habits. The shift in emphasis in schools today is in making educational thought and practice relevant to the needs of today's society (Costa & Bellanca, 1992).

Researchers agree that the lack of social skills can negatively impact students' success in school as well as in life. The teaching of social skills could impact many aspects of students' lives. Not only will this contribute to a positive school climate but also will give students the skills needed to lead productive lives.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Students at the elementary level exhibited poor social skills that led to inappropriate classroom behaviors: lack of co-operation, interrupting the teacher during instruction, use of put downs, inattentiveness to the speaker, and inappropriate physical contact with other children. Teacher observation checklists, teacher journal entries, and student surveys showed evidence of this problem.

Student surveys (Appendix A) were administered Week 1 of the study to selected second, fourth, and fifth grade physical education classes. The numbers in Table 1 indicate the percent of students responding in each category. The students at the second grade level, shown in Table 1, felt good about their behavior as indicated by the percent of students who felt they exhibited good social skills all or most of the time. The students's perceptions of their own behavior are not always accurate at this age level. The students who answered most of the time or sometimes were more in line with the perceptions of the researcher. It is interesting to note that only 4% of the students felt that they rarely exhibited positive behaviors in four out of six of the categories.

Table 1

Percent of Second Grade Student Responses on Frequency of Selected Social Skills

	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I listen when others are talking	57	30	9	4	0
I am nice to others	61	26	9	4	0
I share my equipment and ideas	66	30	4	0	0
I take responsibility for my actions	57	26	9	4	0
I keep my hands and feet to myself	61	17	17	4	0
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	66	17	17	0	0

Table 2

Percent of Fourth Grade Student Responses on Frequency of Selected Social Skills

	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I listen when others are talking	27	47	16	3	7
I am nice to others	60	27	13	0	0
I share my equipment and ideas	47	30	10	7	6
I take responsibility for my actions	53	43	3	0	0
I keep my hands and feet to myself	57	37	6	0	0
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	40	37	16	0	7

Table 2 shows that the students at the fourth grade level thought highly of their behaviors but showed some perception of a problem. Over 6% of the students felt they never exhibited positive behavior in listening, sharing and paying attention. Sixteen percent of the students felt they only listened sometimes when others were speaking.

Only about half of the students felt they took responsibility for their actions or kept their hands and feet to their selves all the time.

Table 3

Percent of Fifth Grade Student Responses on Frequency of Selected Social Skills

	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I listen when others are talking	27	54	19	0	0
I am nice to others	35	50	12	3	0
I share my equipment and ideas	27	27	42	4	0
I take responsibility for my actions	27	46	23	4	0
I keep my hands and feet to myself	58	27	15	0	0
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	38	50	12	0	0

Table 3 shows that at the fifth grade level there was more of an awareness of inconsistencies in behavior. The fifth graders recognized that sometimes their behaviors were not always acceptable. Although none of the students responded "never" to the

survey, almost half of the students responded that they do not share their equipment and 23% only sometimes take responsibility for their actions. Only about 50% of the students surveyed reported listening, being nice to others, taking responsibility for their actions, and paying attention, most of the time.

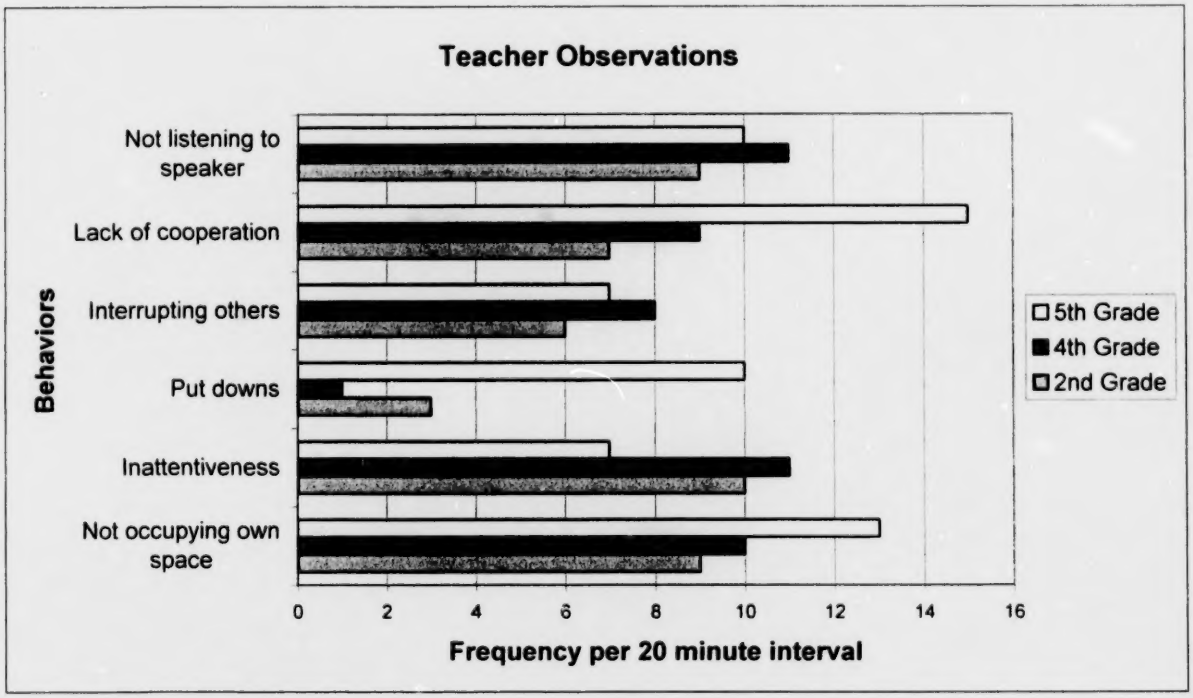

Figure 1. Teacher observation on frequency of targeted social behavior.

The teacher observation checklist (Appendix B) on frequency of targeted social behavior was administered Week 1 of the study to second, fourth, and fifth grade physical education classes. Figure 1 shows evidence of problems existing in the targeted social behaviors. Figure 1 shows the fifth graders had difficulty cooperating, using put downs, and staying in their own space, while the fourth graders had more difficulties in listening and paying attention. The second graders had the most difficulty in the areas of

inattentiveness, not listening to the speaker, and not occupying their own space.

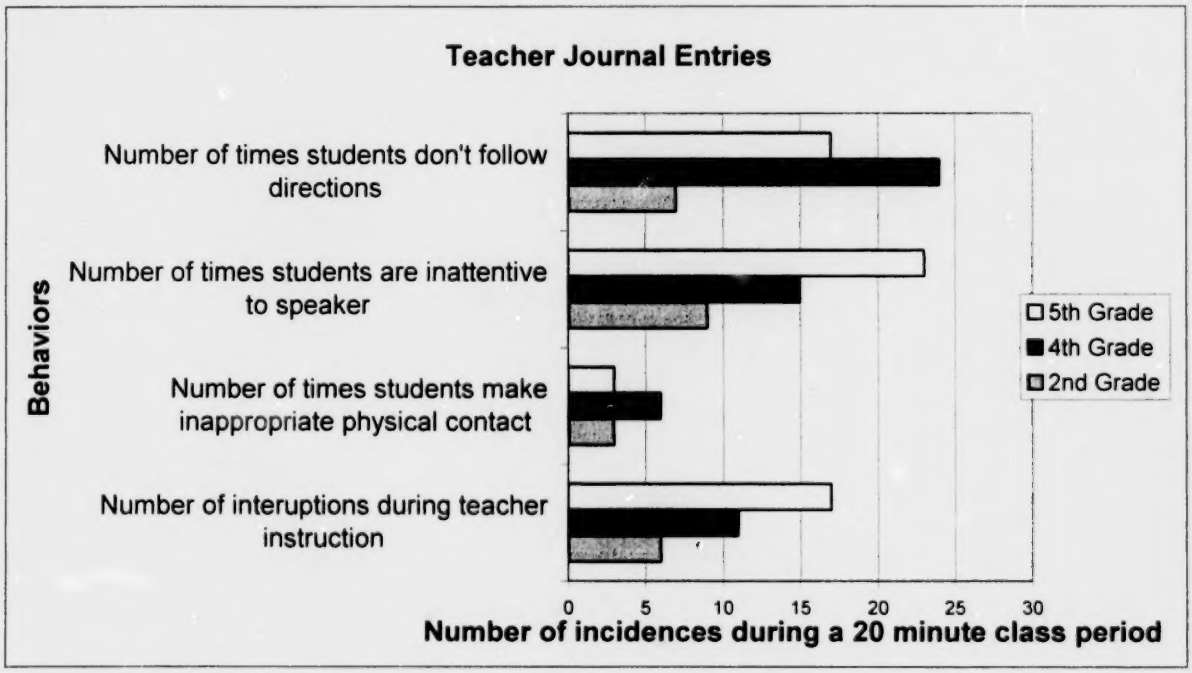

Figure 2. Teacher journal entries of negative social behaviors exhibited during a 20-minute physical education class.

Teacher journal entries (Appendix C) were administered week one of the study to the selected second, fourth, and fifth grade physical education classes. Figure 2 indicates that at all three grade levels, the frequency of students not following directions and being inattentive to the speaker indicate a problem. The fifth graders tended to interrupt the teacher during instruction more often than the first and fourth graders. They also had difficulty with not following directions and being inattentive to the speaker. The fourth graders had the most difficulty with following directions. The second grade students had problems being attentive to the speaker as well as paying attention.

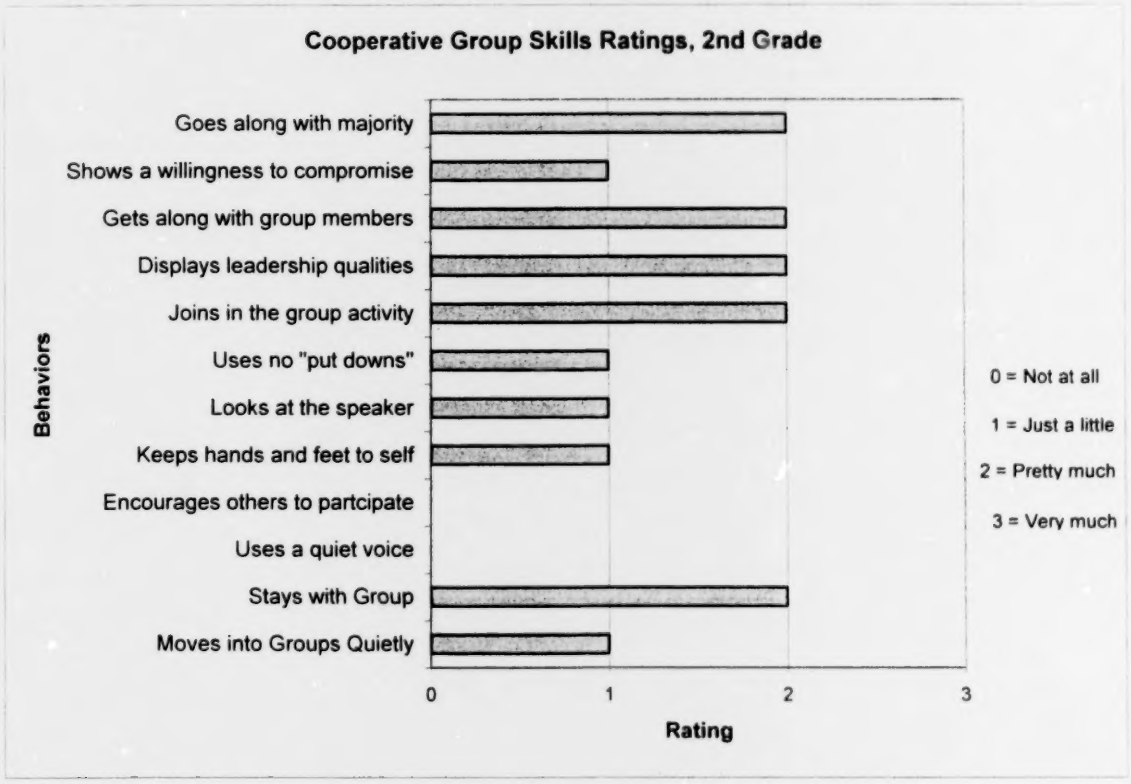

Figure 3. Cooperative group skills ratings of second grade students during a 20-minute physical education class.

The cooperative group skills ratings (Appendix D) were administered during a cooperative group lesson during Week 1 of the study to select second, fourth, and fifth grade students. Figure 3 indicates that second grade students had difficulties when assigned to cooperative groups. Areas of concern were, encouraging each other and using quiet voices. These skills were not observed in the students. Compromising, not

using put downs, looking at the speaker and moving into groups quietly were only observed to a small degree.

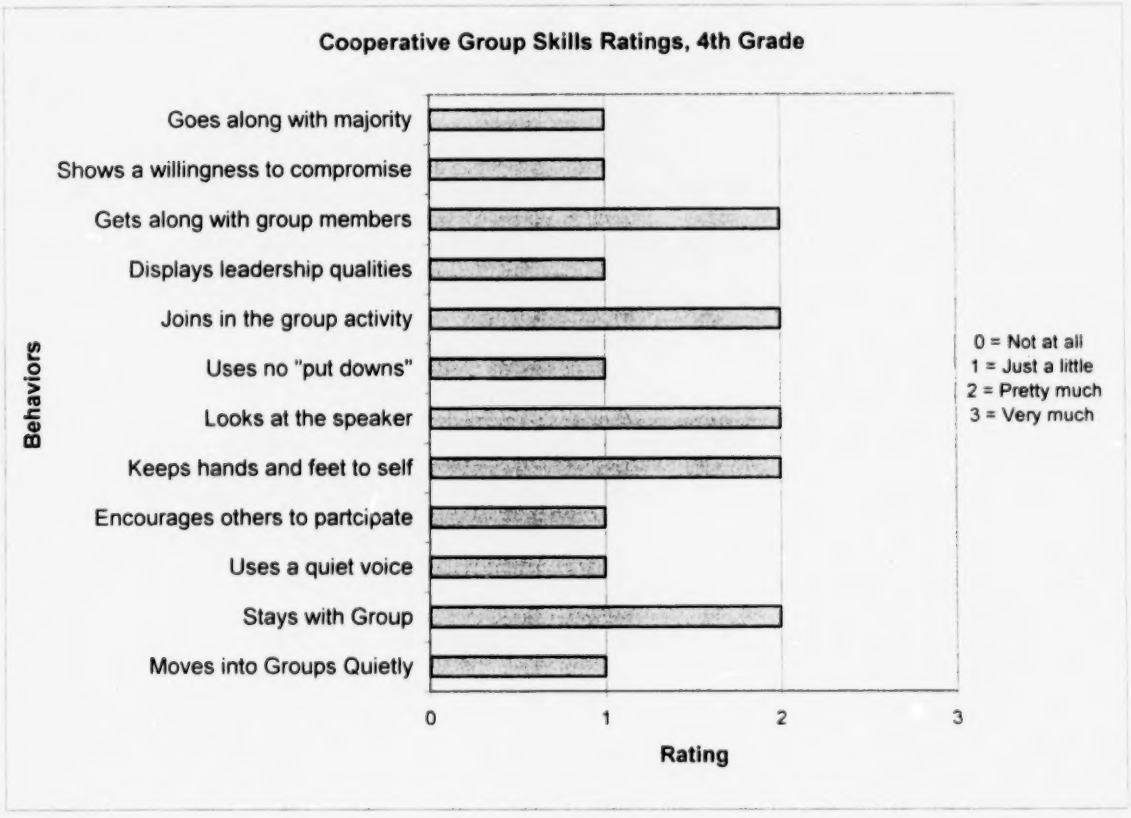

Figure 4. Cooperative group skills rating of fourth grade students during a 20-minute physical education class.

The cooperative group skills rating (Appendix D) was administered to fourth grade students during a cooperative group lesson the first week of the study. The ratings show that the fourth grade students were weak in seven out of twelve areas rated. The fourth grade students showed an inability to go along with the majority, compromising, displaying leadership qualities, not using put downs, encouraging each other, using quiet voices and moving into groups quietly.

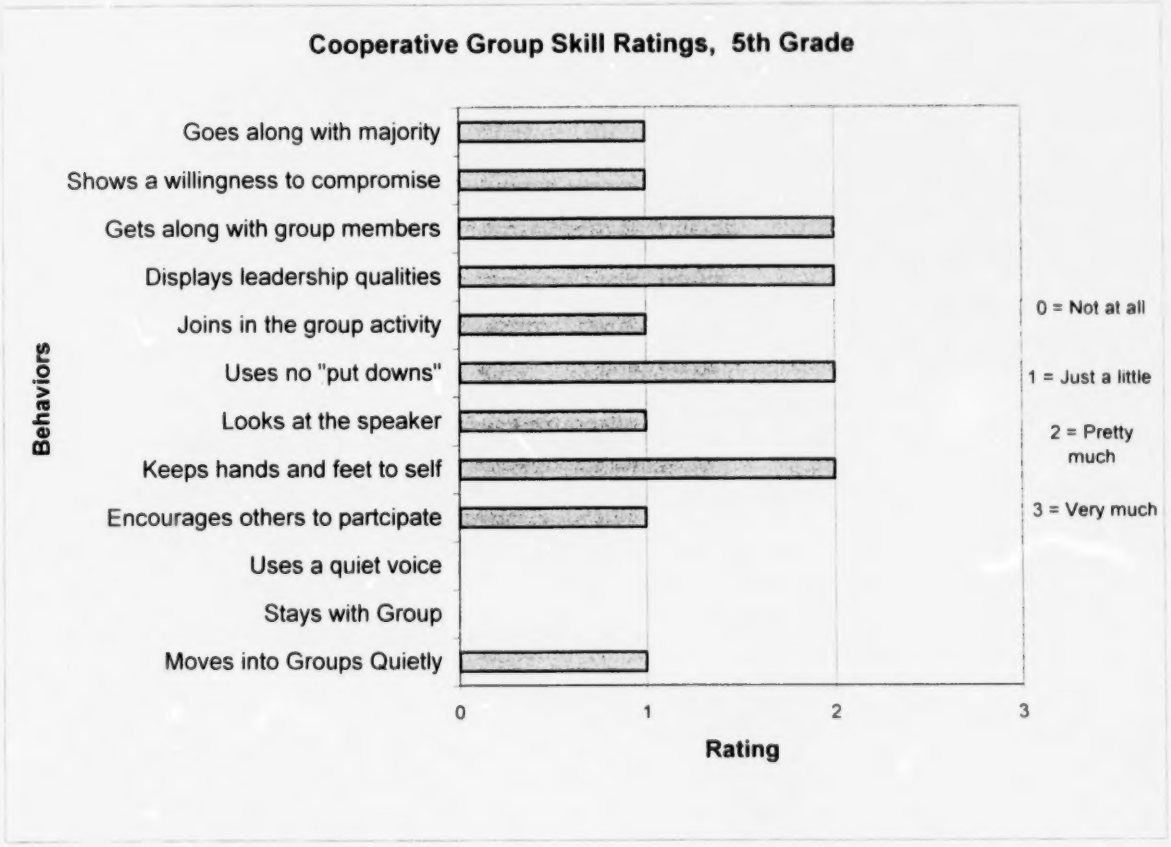

Figure 5. Cooperative group skills ratings of fifth grade students during a 20-minute physical education class.

The cooperative group skill ratings (Appendix D) was administered to fifth grade students during a lesson using cooperative groups. The researcher observed the student's behavior while they worked in their cooperative groups during the first week of the study. The fifth grade students did a very poor job of using quiet voices as well as staying with their groups. The ratings also indicated that they needed more work on going along with

the majority, compromising, joining group activities, looking at the speaker as well as moving into groups quietly.

Probable Causes

A lack of positive social skills was apparent in the three targeted classrooms. Factors that contributed to the inappropriate social skills included lack of listening skills, poor self- esteem, few positive role models, and positive social skills not being taught at home.

Poor listening skills were evident in the physical education class setting. The inability of children to listen greatly affects group dynamics as well as interpersonal communication. During group instruction students displayed habits such as not looking at the speaker, poor listening posture, verbally interrupting the speaker, fidgeting, inattentiveness, and touching or talking to others. All of these behaviors caused disruptions to the lesson and required the teacher to stop instructing in order to regain the attention of the group. Often the disruption of only one or two students who cannot sit still or be quiet takes instruction time from the teacher and learning time from the rest of the students.

During physical education class students with low self-esteem often displayed disruptive behavior. They tended to make poor choices. Those students often misbehaved in order to attract attention. Other attention-getting behavior included blurting out comments and displaying off-task behavior. The students with a poor sense of identity tended to put down others, used violent behavior in order to get what they wanted, blamed others, or made excuses for their behavior.

The lack of positive role models may be another factor in the development of positive social skills in students. Students learn social skills by imitating adult social behavior. There are adult family members who are lacking positive social skills that can be reflected in students' behavior. Sometimes a child has few role models because of single parent homes or the lack of nuclear family structures. Students may emulate the actions of professional athletes or movie stars who sometimes exhibit violent or inappropriate behavior without suffering negative consequences.

The demands of work and home life can often create a situation where there is not enough time left in the day to teach social skills. Often no responsible adult is home and the child is left alone. Many parents either do not know how to teach social skills or fail to model them to their children. Unfortunately, improper adult behaviors are seen more frequently in the school and social settings that set poor examples for students.

Researchers suggest several underlying causes for a lack of social skills in elementary children. A lack of positive role models, low self-esteem or low self-concept, social skills not being taught at home, single parent families, lack of listening skills, and latch key situations are among the probable causes.

Namka (1997) observed that children from dysfunctional families are not taught how to talk, trust, or feel properly. They seldom have positive social skills modeled for them. Because they are not taught how to express their emotions, they often exhibit ineffective behavior as a way of dealing with stress. They learn to use manipulation and violence as a way to cope with that stress. Children may turn to drugs, alcohol, or gangs in order to feel better or their unexpressed feelings could turn into physical body symptoms. Children from unhealthy families frequently cope with stress by blaming

others, exhibiting submissive behaviors, distractibility, hyperactive behavior, or withdrawal. When children exhibit poor social skills they are often disliked by their peers and fail to form bonds with others. Without satisfying friendships, they often turn to antisocial behavior and feel alienated from other people. They might favor the exciting life on the street over school activities.

According to Glasser's (1969) reality therapy theory, disruptive behavior can be attributed to a students' lack of positive identity. Such students may have low self-esteem and do not feel important or worthwhile. Children need to understand that they are responsible for behaving in a way that fulfills their needs to be successful. As teachers become involved with this process they must understand that a child's past performance does not necessarily indicate what his future performance will be. To break the cycle of failure breeding failure, teachers must realize that students who have failed all of their lives can succeed if they become involved with a responsible nonjudgmental, caring person.

Children have many influences in their lives. School is only one of those influences. It competes with peers, social service institutions, television, videos, the pressure to conform, the need to be different, religion, the lure of risk, fear of loneliness, and family relationships. Because of these influences, classroom lessons must become life lessons. Students need adults and peers in their lives to make up a community of learners. Students need this support in order to face the social and emotional dilemmas in their lives. Unfortunately at a time when children need more support to meet the challenges of development, the economic and social changes of the last 40 years have actually lessened that support. Many families need both parents to work outside of the

home in order to make ends meet. Many families have one parent working more than one job. Extended families, which used be there for the children, have disappeared. Close-knit communities, where all adults watched out for the children, are now communities of strangers. A critical part of the educational system must be in the development of social and emotional skills. Until a priority is given to the development of these skills society cannot expect to lessen violence, substance abuse, disaffection, intolerance, or the high dropout rate (Elias, et al., 1997).

As children, listening is the first language mode learned. It provides a base for all aspects of language and cognitive growth. Listening continues to be a critical component in all learning and is an essential factor in communication (Hyslop, 1988). In all the time spent communicating, listening is the skill used most. Research shows that in the breakdown of communication skills, 40% of the time is spent on listening, 35% on talking, 16% on reading, and 9% on writing (Burley-Allen, 1995). The importance of listening is so clear that one would assume that it would be taught across the curriculum at every grade level. Unfortunately the reverse is true, and reading and writing are the communication skills that receive the emphasis. Educational development can be improved by developing listening skills that, in turn, lead to positive improved professional and personal relationships. Good active listening skills promote positive relationships, self-awareness, and professional success. Empathetic listening may accomplish many things. It may solve the problems of other people, reduce tension, facilitate cooperation, promote positive open communication, develop an active, attentive mind, and enhance a good self-concept (Burley-Allen, 1995). Neglecting to teach listening skills denies students the full benefit of their education.

The number one cause of stress for teachers, according to Brophy (1996), is coping with students who display problems in their personal and social behavior. Dealing with students who have problems requires extra time, energy, and patience. Successful student socialization greatly depends on a teacher's ability to implement an authoritative teaching style for classroom management and to use effective counseling skills when attempting to develop a positive relationship with individual students. Teachers who lack these skills become frustrated and give up easily. Stressing what not to do rather than what to do is ineffective. Teachers who develop positive class management skills are able to stay focused on seeking solutions when confronted with difficult behavior problems.

When students display poor social skills more than teaching time is lost. Johnson, D.W. and Johnson, R.T. (2000) explained the costs of not managing conflicts successfully. These costs may include lost learning, lost instructional time, vandalism to property, physical injury, psychological stress to students, faculty, and community members, as well as the cost of managing the aftermath of the conflict situations. When students are taught how to manage conflicts constructively, the benefits are many. There is an increase in achievement and retention of academic material, use of higher thinking skills, and healthy mental and social development. The students focus more on problem solving, clarifying personal needs and promoting healthy emotional release as well as strengthening relationships with others. Knowing how to resolve conflicts gives students a developmental benefit that increases the likelihood of academic and career success. Effectively managing conflicts can improve society. The logical place to teach conflict

resolution is in the schools. Teaching conflict resolution will improve quality of instruction and classroom life.

The results of teacher observation checklists, cooperative group skills check list, and teacher journal entries showed that the students in the identified classes were exhibiting poor listening skills as well as poor social skills. The results of these poor skills were manifested in loss of teaching time, teacher frustration and less student learning. Researchers agree that the problem exists and suggested several causes. Among them are a lack of positive role models, low self-esteem, single parent families, lack of listening skills, and the absence of social skills instruction at home.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Appropriate use of social skills among school children has declined in today's society. This lack of appropriate social skills affects children in various areas, such as their family life, interactions with their peers and successful participation in their school communities. When the lack of proper social skills interferes with students' ability to get along in school, teachers find they are spending more time correcting improper behavior than teaching academics. The literature reviewed stressed the importance of attending to students' social and emotional needs. The critical link that is necessary between the development of appropriate social skills along with academic skills was explained. The literature showed how both elements must be present in order to help students become responsible citizens in a changing world.

There are many definitions of what constitutes social skills. Elliot and Gresham (1993) defined social skills as socially acceptable learned behaviors that allow a person to interact with others in a way that elicits positive responses and helps to avoid negative responses. Warger and Rutherford (1993) called social skills specific, identifiable, learned behaviors that produce positive social consequences in social situations. Another

more general definition of social competence is an individual who engages successfully in social interactions with peers and adults resulting in positive outcomes. Outcomes are satisfying relationships and competent participation in group situations (Katz and McClellan, 1997).

Social skills and social competence are sometimes used interchangeably. Combs and Slaby (1977) defined social skills as "the ability to interact with others in a given social context in specific ways that are socially acceptable or valued, and at the same time personally beneficial, mutually beneficial, or beneficial primarily to others" (p. 162). Social skills should also be considered in the context of self-help skills that involve positive interactions with others. This would involve the interaction between students and other peers or adults that elicit positive reactions (Cartledge and Milburn, 1980).

In addition to inappropriate social skills, weak listening skills may also be a source of frustration for teachers. Teachers spend a great part of each day requiring students to listen, yet listening is a skill that is rarely taught. Much time is spent on teaching the skills of reading and writing. There are numerous opportunities throughout a student's school career to practice reading and writing. Reading and writing skills are stressed in every subject across the curriculum; however, listening is the skill that is needed for success. Students need to be taught to listen and given ample opportunities to practice listening skills. Listening is a method of getting information from speakers or other people. Verbal communication is an interactive process between individuals who alternately speak and then listen both to verbal cues and observe nonverbal cues. Listening is a receptive skill (Burley-Allen, 1995).

Listening Skills

The definition of listening, according to the Speech Communication Association (SCANS) for elementary and secondary students, stresses verbal communication as an interactive process between individuals who alternately speak and listen, including both verbal and nonverbal cues. Listening is a receptive skill. Burley-Allen (1995) defined listening as a method of taking in information from speakers or other people. Listening, according to Ronald and Roskelly (1985), is defined "as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand" (p. 623). Listening shows others that people are interested in them and what they have to say.

There are three listening behaviors that demonstrate good listening skills: 1) giving the speaker full attention by stopping the activity and looking at the speaker. 2) encouraging the speaker to tell more by asking questions or comments about what was said, and 3) showing by the actions of nodding or leaning forward that the speaker is interesting. In daily conversation with others it is important to listen to the messages of others in order to get along. Active listening is the kind of listening that develops good relationships and lets other people know we care about them (Skills for Growing, 1990).

Listening is one of the first language skills children acquire; therefore, listening is the foundation for language and cognitive development as well the process of learning and communication. Wilt (1984) did a study on communication and found that people listen 45% of the time they spend communicating, they speak 30 %, read 16%, and write 9%. Rankin (1983) found that people spend 70 % of personal time communicating and three-fourths of that time listening and speaking. Listening and speaking should have a more

vital role in the education process. Burley-Allen (1995) found that the least amount of educational time was spent on listening and speaking, and the most time was spent on formal writing. Many studies on reasons for what Swanson (1984) called an "inverted curriculum"(p. 23) suggested that educators assume that listening develops naturally (Abelleira, 1987).

Teachers who have had little formal training on teaching listening skills often do not know how to approach teaching of those skills. There are methods that seem to foster listening instruction. Choate and Rakes (1987) offered a structured listening lesson plan which develops concepts relating to student background and interests, gives a purpose for listening, and uses visual aids to focus and reinforce concepts. The teacher asks questions to check for understanding. Abelleira (1978) felt listening should be taught as a separate subject. Lundsteen (1985) suggested that students will listen better when they are interested in the subject they are listening to.

Listening and communication skills in the student-teacher relationship are essential. To foster listening skills, self-responsibility and independence need to be nurtured. Tomlinson (1984) felt listening was "active listening" which required the understanding of the speaker. Gordon (1985) saw empathy as an essential part of listening that led to the acceptance of the speakers concerns. The counseling skill of active listening may help students with communication problems. In this method the listener feeds back the message of the sender. Active listening ensures a greater understanding of what the speaker has said. Active listening involves an interaction between speaker and listener with an understanding of and feedback of what was communicated. For active listening

to occur certain attitudes must be present:

1. A feeling of trust that students can solve their own problems.
2. A mind set that a solution is possible.
3. The feelings of the speaker must be accepted without judgment.
4. An understanding that "this, too, will pass."
5. The listener must want to help solve the problem and make time to do so.
6. The listener needs to be empathic to speaker.
7. Active listening allows the speaker to clarify his feelings.
8. There must be respect for privacy (Gordon & Burch, 1974, pp. 75-76).

When active listening is practiced, more time is available for teaching and learning. There tends to be fewer discipline problems when mutual caring, respect, and love are created between students and teachers. Active listening can do the following:

1. Diffuse strong negative feelings so students can get back on task.
2. Students may acquire a deeper understanding of own emotions.
3. Problem solving is promoted.
4. The student who is heard to is more willing to listen to teachers and others.
5. The student is responsible for analyzing and solving own problems.
6. Close and positive relationships are developed between students and teachers.
7. Meet the needs of students and teachers reducing the number of communication conflicts (Gordon & Burch 1974, p.78-79).

Modeling

The use of modeling appropriate behavior is an effective method of teaching listening skills to children. Oden (1987) stressed that a strong emotional attachment of infants to a significant adult is critical to the social emotional development of children. Oden believed that various instructional approaches and experiences in social skills have proven effective in increasing children's social competence. Coaching, modeling, reinforcement, and peer pairing are all methods that can help children with their social cognitive and behavior skills and provide them with ways to reduce peer rejection and increase peer acceptance. Patten (1992) believed that regardless of how gifted a child is mentally or physically, his or her ultimate success and happiness depends on his or her ability to get along with people. The skills required to get along with people may be taught by setting rules and standards for acceptable behavior. These would include respecting ourselves, others, and belongings. The skills can also be taught by modeling the behaviors desirable for children to learn, teaching them the vocabulary and words to use, and allowing them to practice these behaviors. Goleman (1997) discussed at great length the power of modeling that parents have on their children. Children who have grown up in abusive homes tend to treat their own children in the same manner, and children who have grown up with parents who have given them unconditional love tend to bestow this unconditional love on their own children. Clearly, modeling is a powerful tool that teachers and parents can use.

Social Skills

Sylwester (2000) believed that the ability of children to recognize inappropriate social behavior is a key developmental skill, and that the classroom provides students with opportunities to confront and solve real social problems in institutional environments that differ from the informality of the students' neighborhoods and homes. Teachers should not think of classroom management as something they do to students but rather should use the classroom as a laboratory. The classroom environment can aid children in developing their social and democratic skills consciously and collaboratively; misbehavior shifts from only being something negative to an opportunity for students to use their social and collaborative skills. A social skills curriculum grounded in collaborative classroom management could help develop skills in behavior recognition, data gathering, analysis, and negotiation.

Warger and Rutherford (1993) developed an educational program that incorporated social skills instruction and created a positive environment for learning in the classroom. The program included three phases for implementation. Phase one defined the social skill in measurable and observable terms, and included an assessment plan. Phase two was the direct teaching, practice, and application of the skill. The students were taught the steps involved in performing and practicing the social skill, and the teacher modeled and provided feedback to the students on their performance. Visual aids were used, and students demonstrated the social skill they had acquired. The third phase allowed students to demonstrate responsibility for their own progress, and for transferring it to other settings. Progress was tracked through observation throughout the instructional phase, and the performance of the student was assessed.

One of the best teaching strategies for strengthening interactive skills is to give children many opportunities to engage in social situations. There are other methods that can be used to shape better social skills. The teacher helps to foster better verbal communication between student by providing the students clear ways to express their feelings, desires, and ideas. By creating situations where the children have to take turns the teacher helps the children practice patience and courtesy. Children benefit from learning how to negotiate and compromise in social situations. When students are taught to tactfully assert what they need or want, conflicts are resolved gracefully. Pairing children for activities provides opportunities for social interaction also (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

Connelly, T. et al. (1995) discussed different strategies that maybe used to increase social development. They stated that children who engage in play with peers demonstrated greater social skills. Teachers who focus on both social development and intellectual development allow children to experience greater satisfaction in the classroom (Prawat & Nickerson, 1985). Joint problem solving is a method used to develop intellectual and social skills in students as they progress from elementary school into adolescence (Johnson, et al., 1993;). Katz L.G. & Chord S.C. (1989) suggested that an effective way to develop social abilities is to assign a group project whereby students become engaged in learning.

Vygotsky(1978), and Rogoff (1990) believed that a child's cognitive development occurs in the social context. Basically young children learn from peer and adult models in their culture. When the physical environment is conducive to academic, intellectual and social development the sense of community improves.

When the environment is physically engaging and includes large motor activities, the students can build confidence in social abilities. Play centers and activities are set up in order to allow for a wide range of social interactions for its participants (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

Direct Instruction of Social Skills

Social competence consists of a variety of social skills that lead to social effectiveness. The lack of appropriate social skills causes low self-esteem, peer rejection, social maladjustment, mental health problems, and delinquency. Many students who exhibit negative social skills have never had the opportunity to learn appropriate social skills. Because of this, teaching social skills is critical to improving delinquent behavior; a proactive approach to social skills instruction may have a positive effect on behavior (Rutherford, et al., 1993)

The review of the literature showed several models that could be used in order to teach social skills. One of those is the use of direct instruction. Students may learn more if the teacher explains clearly what students are expected to learn and then demonstrates a procedure with which to accomplish that particular skill. This direct instruction method of teaching is based upon the theory that knowing how to learn may not come naturally to all students. Teachers can guide students through learning steps while helping them to recognize the purpose and results of each step. The criteria for direct instruction includes giving clear directions and goals, presenting well-organized step-by-step tasks, asking frequent questions to check for understanding, and providing many opportunities to practice skills. The process of direct instruction is effective in teaching basic skills to

young, disadvantaged children and also to older, higher ability students who must learn to master more complex skills (U.S. Department of Education, 1987).

Teachers are in an excellant position to teach social skills to their students. Teachers need to help the students build social relationships by creating situations where students can become aware of others' feelings and interests. Teachers can discourage negative labeling by expecting children to think about and accept each other's differences. Instructors can help students participate appropriately in group discussions by encouraging listening patiently to others. In the classroom, an atmosphere should be created to help children discover common interests, experiences and preferences (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

Canter and Petersen (1995) explained steps necessary in creating a caring classroom community. They maintained that prosocial expectations are the first step. Social rules must be set along with classroom rules. When establishing rules, the teacher should choose only a few age specific and developmentally appropriate rules. Teachers should establish consequences that have fair logical connections to the rules broken. Consequences should be unpleasant, age appropriate, and easily enforced. The student needs to experience first hand what prosocial skills are. Teaching specifically what respect and what put downs are, for example, maybe accomplished by the use of puppets or through role-playing activities.

Cartledge, G. and Milburn, G. (1980) discussed teaching prosocial skills to children. In their opinion, social skills should be taught in the following manor: First, teachers should explain what the skill is; next they should present a model or a

demonstration of the skill; have the students practice or rehearse that skill; give feedback on how they are doing, and practice in real life situations.

Social games assist the instructor in various ways. The game becomes the vehicle for teaching specific social skills. The games motivate the children to actively participate. Games simulate real life situations where students practice skills and learn consequences in a non-threatening situation. Cognitive problem solving helps students analyze social situations and make decisions about how to handle social problems. Teaching children to express emotions constructively develops an understanding of ones own feelings as well as those of others (Namka, 1997).

Teaching the prosocial skills, such as using good manners, paying compliments, listening attentively, listening actively, using "I" messages, sharing and taking turns, and displaying empathy, are essential behaviors to help individuals and groups get along. There are many ways for a teacher to develop those skills. A teacher could integrate the prosocial skills into a content area. As lessons are presented, teachers would clearly state the purpose and objective of each skill. The lessons would help to show students what prosocial behavior looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Incorporating prosocial skills into daily routines increases the likelihood that a particular social skill will be improved. When minor inappropriate behavior occurs the teacher redirects the student by physical proximity, saying the students name or generally praising good behavior (Canter & Petersen, 1995).

Remembering to use praise to encourage students to continue to practice positive social skills is important. Effective praise changes and improves the behavior of students. Praise develops positive relationships between students and teachers. It is a

way to recognize students' effort and progress. There are four steps in the process of effective praise:

1. Describe appropriate behavior that will increase understanding and the chances the student will repeat the desired behavior.
2. Explain the rationale or reason why the skill is beneficial to self and others. Students are more willing to cooperate when reasons or consequences for the behavior are given.
3. Check for understanding often.
4. Tell the students what rewards they will get for appropriate behavior. (p. 71-76).

Effective praise works well when given privately or to a whole group that has demonstrated a skill. It is important to use praise more often than corrective statements in order to improve students' self-esteem. In general, noticing positive behavior and giving immediate feedback in the form of praise enhances learning (Connelly, et al., 1995).

Namka (1997) agreed with the concept of direct instruction of social skills. She noted that teaching social skills is consistent with learning theory and child development theory. She also explained that, since these are new times and children face different issues, these new issues must be addressed. Children need to be taught positive social skills and be provided with skill training to help them deal with the problems they face. Children need a supportive classroom and community that can reinforce positive behavior. Teachers need to teach children to care for and support each other. Namka concurred with researchers when she stated that prosocial skills give children tools to use

in order to make good choices about their behavior. The more tools the child has, the larger the number of choices the child has available. Children who have a larger number of skills to draw from have more confidence in handling difficult situations. Social skills' training offers tools and techniques for individuals to use to become happier human beings. Namka suggested steps to use when teaching social skills. She explained that they are similar to teaching academic subjects, except that play, group activities, and discussion take on a stronger role. Namka's nine steps to teaching social skills are:

1. Identify the skill to be taught.
2. Discuss the skill and model the desired response.
3. Give the rule and the alternatives to the rule.
4. Help the child know what to say and do in regards to the new skill.
5. Have the child practice self-talk.
6. Provide practice of the new skill through games, modeling, and role-playing.
7. Reinforce the new skill.
8. Teach the child to feel good about using the skill.
9. Provide opportunities for reinforcement of the skill in daily activities. (p. 5)

Namka concluded by maintaining that when children are taught the skills with which to express themselves in positive ways, aggressive behaviors decreases. Social skills are enjoyable to teach because educators feel good about themselves when sharing those skills with students.

Cooperative Learning

Johnson and Johnson (1998) described cooperative learning as the use of small groups for instructional purposes that require students to work together for their own and

each other's learning. In order for cooperative groups to be truly cooperative in nature, the students in the groups must believe that all of the group members are equally important to the success of the group. They must each do their fair share of the work. They must also be able to use the appropriate interpersonal and small-group skills that are needed to work cooperatively. The basic elements of a true cooperative lesson are: positive interdependence, individual accountability, interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson & Holubec 1993). When cooperative group instruction is used correctly studies show that it is very effective. Hundreds of studies have been conducted over the past 90 years comparing the effectiveness of cooperative, competitive and individualistic efforts. These studies have been conducted in different decades in different subject areas, settings, and with different age groups, and show that the more one works in cooperative learning groups, the more a person learns, the more he retains from those lessons, and the better he understands the material. In addition to these benefits, Johnson and Johnson found that cooperative group activities tended to result in more willingness to challenge oneself, more willingness to persist at a difficult task, a greater use of critical thinking skills, more evidence of creative thinking, more transfer of learning from one situation to another, more time on task, and a more positive attitude toward the tasks being completed. These studies also showed an improvement in interpersonal relationships when cooperative activities are used (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

The overall structure of the classroom can influence children's social competence. When a classroom is viewed as a community social behavior is fostered and developed. As community life has changed over the years, many families have decreased in size, and

family mobility has increased. Because of this, children have fewer opportunities to experience community life. Coleman (1987) suggested that experiencing community life has a profound effect on how people develop a sense of community. He felt that schools provide a good place to share in community. The classroom is a good place to start to build community in children's lives. Once a child experiences the feeling of community in his classroom that feeling can transfer to other children, parents, and teachers (Coleman, 1987).

There are several successful ways to structure that feeling of community into the classroom. The teacher can create an atmosphere of supportive cooperative activities where the students would have the opportunity to practice social skills. Since it is important for each child to feel that he is a part of the classroom community, setting up routines where students feel they are accountable to the whole group will positively affect social skills development (Katz & McClellan, 1989).

Flanagan (1997) wrote about a program where the faculty of an elementary school in San Bernardino, California successfully implemented a social skills program. She explained that the school began by choosing six social skills as school-wide themes for two-month periods. The faculty then matched the social skills with appropriate games and tasks that would encourage the practice of those social skills. Encouragement was the first skill chosen because encouraging each other seemed to be one of the easiest skills, and was less threatening to the students. Examples of some of the other social skills chosen were: helping, kindness, courtesy, caring, compromising, complimenting, active listening, paraphrasing, and accepting personal differences. The social skills were then matched with physical education activities. All of the activities were cooperative in

nature, and, in the beginning, utilized only small groups of two or three students. Social skills were monitored during all phases of the lessons, and part of each lesson's closure referred to the social skill. They found this program to be successful tool to use in teaching social interaction skills and in providing meaningful experiences for their students.

Mercier (1992) discussed how to use cooperative activities to teach social skills. His approach was similar to that of other experts in the field. Mercier suggested introducing the task by identifying and naming the social skill (caring, courtesy, encouragement), defining the skill, providing a discussion about the need for the skill, brainstorming ideas about the identified social skill by developing a T-chart and playing a cooperative game that had the potential for applying this social skill. As the students performed the task, the teacher or students monitored the social skill. As the lesson progressed, there was periodic acknowledgement and reinforcement for the students using the social skill.

Cooperative group instruction is an effective tool to use in practicing prosocial skills. Cooperative teams show students the positive effects of getting along. If properly applied, cooperative learning is successful in developing social skills. Children learn from each other when cooperative team members are mixed in abilities and learning styles. Assigned roles for group work makes the group members feel needed and important. Cooperative learning works when team members are responsible for group success. Structuring the teams properly will determine classroom success. Useful guidelines to follow when creating cooperative groups are:

- Groups should be limited to 4-6 members.

- Teams need to be diverse in nature.
- The group should be together long enough so that students can get to know each other and experience group success.
- Start with activities that allow students to get to know each other.
- Create team identity to encourage group cohesiveness.
- Clearly define rules, expectations and behavior.
- Establish rules that will encourage students to work well together.
- Remind students of the rules each time the groups' change.
- Make the consequences for breaking the rules clear and check for understanding.
- Create rules and jobs in order to complete the task given.
- Change roles to ensure equal opportunity of responsibility.
- Circulate and monitor behavior and watch for unwanted conflicts and resolve them quickly. (p. 83-86)

As a tool for developing social skills, cooperative learning is an effective teaching strategy. Clearly it shows that getting along with others is in the students' best interest and makes tasks easier and more enjoyable. Many career choices depend on working with others. As students have more opportunities to learn, share ideas, pool resources, and work together, they learn valuable work skills (Canter & Petersen, 1995).

Physical education classes provide an ideal place in which to develop cooperative skills. Grineski (1996) explained the benefits of using cooperative learning in physical education. He stated that when teachers use cooperative learning, the quality of their physical education classes increases. One reason for this is that the nature of cooperative learning is inclusive, rather than exclusive. When all of the students work together, each

student's need for goal achievement will be met. Not only will the students' social skills improve with the use of cooperative lessons, but they will also have the opportunity to learn from each other. Participation in some competitive activities minimizes motor skill learning and detracts from positive feelings about the self, as opposed to cooperative activities.

A study conducted by Grineski (1996) reported the effect that individual, competitive, and cooperative goal-structured physical education activities had on four measures of physical fitness and social interaction for second and third grade children. The study showed that the students who participated in the cooperative group activities demonstrated not only higher levels of positive social interactions, but also showed more improvement in physical fitness levels. Grineski (1996) showed that cooperative games were associated with a higher incidence of positive social behaviors and a lower incidence of negative behaviors than a program using individual physical education activities.

Vigil (1997), an elementary physical education teacher, wrote that because of the constant interaction that occurs when performing games, sports and movement skills, physical education class is a perfect place to develop positive social skills. The expected outcome of organized sports should be good sportsmanship. She added that the potential for developing positive social skills is there only if the instructor is teaching those skills.

Cooperative learning is one of the best ways to facilitate the development of positive social skills. One model to use for social skills instruction is based on Johnson's, et al (1993) research on cooperative learning. In this model there are three main components to a cooperative learning lesson: introduce the task and social skill, perform

the task, and process the use of the social skill. The processing component of cooperative learning is the most important for successful student acquisition of the task and social skill. Without it, students do not retain or transfer their learning to new situations. During the processing of the activity the students get to think about the lesson and evaluate what occurred. Dishon & O'Leary (1984) concured with this model

The rationale for the use of cooperative groups includes increasing academic achievement, providing a sense of control, and improving social relationships. Encouragement from peers during group work improves students' time on task. Students have opportunities to talk through the material, to explain it to each other and look at it in different ways. This giving and receiving of information enhances student performance (Slavin, 1983; Ziegler, 1981). Group work positively influences a student's sense of control by helping him to see that the success of his task is dependent upon the quality of his own contributions, not on chance or luck (Gonzales, 1979; Slavin, 1983; DeVries, Edwards & Wells, 1974; Weiner & Kukla, 1970). Students feel that they have a chance to succeed and believe working toward a successful outcome is a valued goal. Students' social relationships improve because when students work together toward a common goal they have a chance to get to know one another as individuals. They become committed to each other. Friendships develop among students who might not have had the opportunity to get to know each other because of ethnicity, socio-economic status or gender (Kagan, 1989; Slavin, 1983). Other non-cognitive benefits can come from experiencing cooperative learning. Cooperative learning increases the feeling of self-esteem and self-worth academically and socially. Working in cooperative groups is enjoyable and can produce feelings of amity by team members. There is more time for

tasks and less time spent correcting inappropriate classroom behavior. Cooperative experiences increase the likelihood of cooperative and altruistic behavior more than competitive or individual experiences. This is important because cooperative learning produces positive changes in prosocial attitudes, skills that are necessary to get along in society (Slavin, 1983).

Lavoie (1992) found that education plays a critical role in students' social development and self-concept. He felt that learning is their job and their identity and that going to school is what students do for a living. Academic success does not determine a child's attitude about school but rather it is his or her success in social experiences that does. Teachers need to provide cooperative learning activities that include the rejected child, and provide opportunities for appropriate social interactions through peer coaching and working in pairs. Teachers should clearly demonstrate acceptance and affection for the isolated child, and teach awareness of the acceptable traits of smiling, laughing, greeting others, extending invitations, conversing, sharing, and complimenting.

Cooperative learning is clearly based on theory, validated by research, and presented with clear procedures that educators can use. The variety of cooperative learning methods available for teacher use ranges from concrete to conceptual to flexible. The outcomes of cooperative learning were shown as achievement, higher-level reasoning, retention, time on task, transfer of learning, achievement motivation, intrinsic motivation, continuing motivation, social and cognitive development, moral reasoning, social support, friendships, reduction of prejudice, and social competencies. It appears as though cooperative learning methods achieve more diverse and positive outcomes than many other instructional strategy (Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. 1989).

Many students in schools today do not use appropriate social skills. Inappropriate physical contact, rude verbal behavior, uncooperative group behavior, and the inability to listen and follow directions are common behaviors for some children. The negative behavior of even one student in a classroom affects every other child in the class, and interrupts the flow of the learning atmosphere. Punishing these children for their negative actions does not always solve the problem. A better solution might be to teach students proper social skills. If students are not getting this type of instruction at home, then they need to receive this instruction at school. Students should not be expected to do what they have not been taught to do. Students cannot be expected to act appropriately if they never learned how. Goleman (1997) wrote about a time when teachers routinely taught such subjects as self-awareness, self-control, empathy, the art of listening, resolving conflicts, and cooperation. Children deserve this type of education.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of implementing cooperative learning activities during the period of January 2001 through May 2001, the targeted elementary students will demonstrate increased participation in classroom activities and improved interpersonal skills as measured by teacher journal entries, observation checklists, and student surveys.

In order to achieve this objective the following processes will be used:

1. Develop cooperative group lessons.
2. Design activities to implement cooperative learning.
3. Establish schedule for using checklists and surveys.
4. Select materials to be used in implementing activities.

As a result of direct instruction of listening skills during the period of January 2001 through May 2001, the targeted elementary students will demonstrate increased classroom performance and improved attention as assessed by teacher journal entries, observation checklists, and student surveys.

In order to achieve this objective, the following processes will be used:

1. Develop listening skills lessons.
2. Design activities to practice listening skills.
3. Establish schedule for using checklists and surveys.
4. Select materials to be used in implementing activities.

As a result of direct instruction of social skills during the period of January 2001 through May 2001, the targeted elementary students will demonstrate increased satisfaction and an improved self-concept as measured by the student surveys, and cooperative skills checklist.

In order to achieve this objective, the following processes will be used:

1. Develop social skills lessons.
2. Design activities to practice social skills.
3. Establish schedule for using checklists and surveys.
4. Select materials to be used in implementing activities.

Action Plan

Week 1 and 2: Pretest; establish baseline data.

- Play game "watch it" and evaluate students' behavior using the teacher observation checklist and teacher journal entries form.
- Administer the student survey.

Week 3 and 4: Teach listening skills.

- Present the "gift of listening".
- Teach active listening skills.

Week 5 and 6: Teach "keeping hands to self".

- Stress own space.
- Teach about inappropriate touching.

Week 7 and 8: Teach courtesy and kindness to others.

- Practice using manners. (please and thank-you)
- Practice helping each other.
- Practice apologizing.

Week 9 and 10: Re-administer the teacher observation checklist, teacher journal entry form, and student survey.

Week 11 and 12: Teach how to encourage each other.

- Use jump rope activities.

Week 13 and 14: Teach cooperative skills.

- Teach group roles.
- Teach compromising skills.
- Teach staying with group.
- Encourage everyone doing his or her part.
- Teach acceptance of differences.
- Practice skills in cooperative groups.
- Administer cooperative group skill checklist.

Week 15 and 16: Administer teacher observation checklist, cooperative group skills check list, student survey, and teacher journal entry form.

- Play game "watch it"
- Plan a cooperative group activity.

Method of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, teacher observation checklists, teacher journal entries, cooperative group skills checklists, and student surveys will be administered.

Teacher observation checklists, and the student surveys will be administered during Weeks 1 and 2 as pretests in order to establish baseline data. Checklists and student surveys will be re-administered during Weeks 9 and 10 to evaluate progress, as

well as Weeks 15 and 16 as posttests. Teacher journal entries will be used as a continuing ongoing activity throughout the intervention.

The cooperative groups check list will be administered during Weeks 13 and 14 to evaluate cooperative group behaviors taught at that time.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve the social skills of targeted children in grades two, four, and five through a variety of activities and teaching techniques. The social skills of the students in this study were measured through behavior checklists, teacher observations, and anecdotal records. The implementation of direct social skills instruction and cooperative learning strategies were selected to produce the desired outcomes.

Direct instruction was one technique used to teach the targeted social skills of listening, encouraging each other, courtesy, kindness, and keeping hands to self. These skills were taught in physical education class through games and movement activities. The "gift of listening" was an activity used for the direct instruction of active listening skills, along with role-playing those skills. In addition the students were taught to use "I-messages." Activities that required specific manners were also used to build and reinforce these concepts. Students practiced recognizing the targeted behaviors through the use of T-charts.

Strategies were also used to teach cooperative group skills. These skills included practicing group roles, compromising, staying with the group, encouraging others to do

their part, and accepting differences. The students were given many opportunities to work in cooperative groups in order to achieve specific objectives.

The implementation of this intervention was broken down into two-week segments. Baseline data were established the first two weeks of the project. The baseline data included teacher observation checklists, cooperative group checklists, and student surveys. These instruments were re-administered during Weeks 9 and 10 as well as Weeks 15 and 16.

At the second grade level, during the first two-week period, baseline data were collected. The students played the game "watch it" while the teacher administered the teacher observation checklist. During the first two weeks the teacher also collected information in the form of the teacher journal entries. During one lesson the students were put into cooperative groups and were given a task. As they worked in their groups the teacher observed their skills and evaluated them by using the cooperative group skills checklist. During this time the student survey was also administered

During Weeks 3 and 4, listening skills were the targeted social skills. The targeted second grade class was presented with the "gift of listening." It was explained that this gift was a wonderful gift that would improve their lives. Inside the box were slips of paper that said, "face the speaker and make eye contact," "stop moving," "stop talking," and "encourage the speaker by nodding." It was then explained how these actions could help them in school and with their friends. The class then practiced talking and listening with a partner. First they practiced listening the correct way and then acted out poor listening skills. The students enjoyed exaggerating the "not listening" exercise, which helped to get the point across. Listening skills were practiced by using games that

required this skill in order to be successful. Parachute activities required the students to listen to the directions very carefully in order to make the particular shapes work. "Simon Says" games were played where students who were not paying close attention were "tricked" by the caller. By making listening activities enjoyable the children worked harder at the proper ways to listen. When the students were particularly inattentive, showing them the 'gift of listening" helped to remind them of the proper way of listening.

The social skill, keeping hands to self, was presented during Weeks 5 and 6. The students practiced this skill by participating in activities that required them to move to various locations in the gym without touching anyone else.

Another spatial skill presented was maintaining one's own space when standing in a line. For second graders maintaining one's own space is a very important and difficult skill. They can practice and practice, but when they are out of the gym they forget to use it. Many children this age will continue to walk in a line until they actually bump up against either a wall or another student. Once the children have a good grasp of own space keeping hands to self becomes easier. When the children stand right next to another child it is very hard for them to keep their hands to themselves. The students need to be continually reminded to respect the spaces around themselves and others.

The targeted social skills for Weeks 7 and 8 were courtesy and kindness. The importance of using manners and saying please and thank-you were stress this week. The students played a game where, as part of the game, the students needed to hand a piece of equipment to other students. Every time they handed the equipment over the student receiving it had to say "Thank-you" to which the student replied, "You're welcome." In another activity when the students asked for a rhythmic ribbon they needed to say,

"Please may I have a ribbon?" and then "Thank-you" upon receiving the ribbon. The activities were followed by a discussion of how it feels when someone is polite. The students all agreed that it made them feel good. As contrived as these activities seem, the students enjoyed doing them. They laughed when they forget to say the right word and they seem to find it a challenge to remember. In order to have the children practice kindness the students worked with partners on the skill, kicking a ball. The students each had a partner. They then "coached" their partner on the three aspects of the kick that was taught to them. The children had the opportunity to work with different partners. This activity helped all the children to have opportunities to help other students and to practice kindness skills. They enjoyed this activity and were, for the most part, kind and helpful.

Weeks 9 and 10 were used to re-administer the teacher observation checklist, teacher journal entry form, and the student survey. The students continued to practice their listening skills, manners, and respecting each others own space.

During weeks 11 and 12 the students worked on encouraging each other. The students were given direct instruction on what was meant by using "encouraging words." The students gave examples like "good job," "nice try," and "you almost have it." While working in groups on jump rope skills, the students were instructed to say encouraging words to each other and be able to report back at the end of class what they heard and what they said. As the researcher circulated around the class many encouraging comments were heard. By focusing on positive comments the morale of the entire group seemed more positive. These skills were stressed during every class so that when the students heard the phrase "use encouraging words" they knew exactly what was expected of them. One day a student reported that he "said one of those encouraging

things to someone. I told them they could take a turn first." This student had deliberately thought about what he said and why it was good to say it.

During Weeks 13 and 14 cooperative group skills were taught and practiced. The goals of these two weeks were to teach group roles, compromising skills, staying with the group, acceptance of differences, and to practice these skills in cooperative groups. A poster with the acronym PALS was used to introduce these skills. PALS stands for Please be nice, Always use quiet voices, Let everyone have a turn, and Stay with your group. The students worked on a Chinese jump rope activity where everyone had a job and each group needed every member in order to succeed. As the students worked on their tasks the cooperative group checklist was administered. Towards the end of this two-week period a substitute teacher was in charge of this class. One of her comments was that she was impressed with how well the students encouraged each other. She also commented on how helpful the children were to each other.

During Weeks 15 and 16 the students continued to work on their cooperative group skills in track and field stations. This activity provided the opportunity to administer the cooperative group skills checklist as well as fill out the teacher journal form. Having the students rotate from one station to the next was an effective way to observe students' behavior and how they interacted with each other. Encouragement could be heard between students. The students also cooperated better with each other. They shared equipment and divided into pairs within their groups easily. They seemed to be able to solve their problems more efficiently. The game "watch it" was also played during which the final teacher observation checklist was administered. The student survey was also given at this time.

The fourth grade group involved in the project had physical education class twice per week for 30 minutes per lesson. The teacher had a total of 15 contact hours and 26 social skills lessons within the 16 week time period of the research project action plan. Social skills were targeted, taught, practiced, and reflected on at the end of each lesson as part of the physical education curriculum and not as a separate activity.

Baseline data were established during the first two weeks of the project. Weeks 3 and 3 listening skills were taught in the framework of small group parachute activities. A small group (chosen and prompted by the teacher) was used to role play a skit that demonstrated poor listening behavior and hurt feelings followed by a discussion. A T-Chart was also developed by the class and the use of a clipboard cruiser was used to tally positive and negative listening behaviors. The instructor also developed a "gift of listening box." This box was a brightly decorated box that contained written reminders of positive listening behaviors that were used to create discussion.

The targeted skills for Weeks 5 and 6 were "keeping hands to self" and the concept of "own space." During the first week the instructor initiated the use of a "squad formation" to sit in for the beginning of class. A discussion developed as to the positives and negatives of this formation to set the tone for the focused social skill of keeping hands to self and sitting in one's own space. The physical education activity used to practice this skill was the use of "walking buddies" or step counters, for walking and jogging laps in the gym to fun music while "honoring each others own space." The instructor also presented the challenge of logging the steps of each student on paper for the next nine weeks and combining the steps for each grade level in an effort to walk enough miles to get to Florida for spring break. In week six a new physical education unit, "The Heart

Adventure," was introduced. It was an obstacle course unit using scooters, tunnels, and directional arrows. The skills of keeping hands to one's self and keeping one's own space were reviewed, discussed, and practiced during the activity with individual and group reflection at the end of class.

In Week 7, the instructor only had one lesson and it was used as a review lesson for listening skills with the "gift of listening box" and then playing the "Healthy Heart" tagging game. During Week 8 a physical education unit of 'activity stations' was started to incorporate the teaching of manners and helping each another. The students role played handing out the walking buddies to each other while saying "please" and "thank-you." An equipment "trading" policy was initiated as long as please and thank-you was used. "Encouraging" one another was practiced at the rope climb station, pogo stick station, and the bungee-jumper station. Reflection on the use of manners and helping one another was done at the end of class.

Weeks 9 and 10 were used to finish the activity stations, do preparation work for the "Jump Rope for Heart" school fundraiser, as well as conduct the "Jump Rope for Heart" event. Small groups were formed for the jumping event within the class, and listening skills were again reviewed with the "Gift of Listening" box.

During Weeks 11, 12, 13, and 14 team and cooperative game activities were utilized to teach cooperative skills. "Bonkerball," a type of baseball activity, and "Newcomb," a volleyball lead -up game, allowed for the practice of group roles, staying with the group, everyone doing their part, making sure everyone has a turn, compromising skills, and acceptance of differences. A T-Chart was used to teach what a good group member looks and sounds like. This chart was utilized at other times during the four-week period for

purposes of review and also as a closing reflective tool. The cooperative skills checklist was administered the last lesson of this unit.

The last two weeks of the research project was spent administering the teacher observation checklist, the teacher journal entry form, and the student survey. The physical education activities used during this time period were partner fitness activities in which the students and their partners were responsible for working together by encouraging and assisting each other to complete the circuit of fitness tests, and record each other's scores. The last lesson the students played "Hideout" which is a running, throwing, dodging, and hiding team game. Social skills were reviewed, reinforced, and monitored during the partner fitness activities and the game.

At the fifth grade level during Weeks 1 and 2, a basketball activity replaced the "watch it" game. Basketball skills along with social skills, taking turns, line waiting, staying in own space, and no use of put downs, were targeted. After completing two teacher observation checklists the researcher observed students having difficulty with listening to directions, staying on task, and inappropriate contact. During this time the student survey was administered for the first time.

Weeks 3 and 4 targeted listening activities. In tumbling class the gift of listening (three things good listening requires) was presented. The second lesson presented "active listening" to students. The students paired up and were told to take turns speaking and listening and discuss "What is your favorite tumbling stunt and why?" The third listening lesson involved a team challenge, the great island movers, where the students had to listen to and follow teacher directions and take turns speaking and listening to each others ideas to accomplish a group task. It was clear that the students responded positively to

these interventions. When the words "active listening" were mentioned a desired behavior was displayed. A visual improvement was also noted in listening skills.

The focus of Weeks 5 and 6 was keeping hands to self. In a gymnastics unit students were assigned small groups. The problem students were assigned to one group so they were easily observed. That group was the only group with problems taking turns and inappropriate contact. The students had to perform a stunt on the piece of apparatus at their station. Music was played while the group rotated every three minutes so all six stations could be visited. Students were expected to follow safety and social rules, keeping in own space, avoiding inappropriate contact, taking turns and helping each when needed for safety. If social expectations were broken the students would receive a safety check. Three of those checks would remove a student from class for the remainder of the unit. Only a few checks were given for inappropriate contact and use of equipment. Two students were removed from class. No one got hurt and most helped each other when needed.

During Weeks 7 and 8 the targeted intervention was kindness to others. Badminton was the activity used to develop manners. The lessons involved groups of four, taking turns serving and hitting the shuttle over a net. Students were instructed on "I messages" and how to use them for conflict resolution. Apologies and behaving in a well-mannered way was encouraged, but there was much verbal arguing, little listening, few positive comments, and no "I messages." The classroom teacher was having the same problems. The second lesson, which they needed desperately, involved playing a badminton game. The class reviewed "I messages" and were shown a visual chart and given specific examples. Students sat down in pairs and took turns giving and receiving

positive and negative "I messages" to each other. They had five minutes to do so. During play the teacher clipboard cruised, writing down positive statements students used in class and gave extra credit for it. At the end of the period the class discussed any comments that might have been missed. The class made some progress in solving conflict in a courteous problem-solving manner.

In Weeks 9 and 10 the teacher observation checklist, teacher journal entry form and students survey were re-administered. The teacher noticed improvement in listening skills, taking turns, inappropriate contact, and better relationships between peers and with the teacher.

Weeks 11and 12 focused on encouraging others. The two lessons were a part of a whole team challenge concept that was taught throughout the school year. The first lesson involved using a T-chart focusing on encouraging words, put downs and their cause and effect. Students knew how to give examples of put downs but had trouble coming up with encouraging statements. The class was divided into small groups with a list of praise statements. Everyone in the group gave each student in the group a sincere praise statement. Most had trouble giving each other encouraging or praise statements. It was hard for them. The second intervention was group juggling and using positive adjectives to describe each other. Students were required to form groups quietly, create a group name and cheer, say a positive adjective to each other, do a group juggle with objects, and reflect on team report card on how the group cooperated and used positive adjectives. Students had trouble giving positive adjectives even with a written list of examples, because students did not fully realize the importance of speaking in an

encouraging manner to reach a common goal. The written report card helped clarify the concept for some. More practice was needed.

Cooperative learning skills were concentrated on in Weeks 13 and 14. A cooperative group checklist was given before and after the cooperative activities were practiced. The following activities provided opportunities to practice cooperative skills, creating a ribbon routine in small groups to perform for the class, a fun parachute-chicken activity, a Northwood adventure, and a team challenge on floods. Specifically the social skills concentrated on were group roles, acceptance of differences, encouragement, no put downs, and listening to others ideas. The ribbon lesson took three class periods, one to create the routine, one practice it and one to demonstrate it. The quality of routines was not what the researcher expected. It was apparent that the students still had a lot to learn.

The parachute-rubber chicken activity required groups to problem solve ways to throw and catch a rubber chicken in a parachute. This activity proved to be productive. Students accomplished the task, cooperated well and had fun.

In the North- woods Adventure the students counted off into groups of six. It took two days for each group to go to six stations. Each station represented a wild animal in the north woods. Students read information cards that had directions on how to do an activity to perform with physical education equipment. Students were expected to use cooperative skills learned in the past few months. The students cooperated well and enjoyed the activity.

The team challenge activity on floods required six randomly formed groups. Groups were to solve a problem simulating a real flood situation using physical education equipment. In two class periods, groups solved three to four problems depending on the

time frame. After each solution or problem solving process, students wrote a group reflection on social skills listed on team report card. The reports showed an increase in awareness and improved ability to cooperate.

During the final Weeks of 15 and 16 the teacher observation checklist, cooperative group skill checklist, student survey, and teacher journal entries were administered. A cooperative checklist was done on a lawn game lesson in small groups. The game "Watch it" was not used. The purpose of the activity was the ability to transfer cooperative learning skills to another activity. Other cooperative activities for observing transfer included creating jump rope rhymes in small groups, a solar system game which required teamwork, an Indian run where a small group set a pace, considered individual differences, and stayed together to perform the task. Students were allowed to choose their own groups for the Indian run. Serious students chose students of similar skill levels and temperaments. The increased level of awareness, value, practice of positive social skills was evident in the students.

The researcher noticed an improvement in listening, encouraging others, use of cooperation skills, and willingness to participate in group activities. With consistent use of direct instruction and cooperative learning techniques, students broadened and enjoyed a self-awareness of using pro-social behavior in the physical education environment. The researchers continued to use cooperative learning and direct instruction methods to enhance students' abilities to display pro-social behavior.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to determine the students' perception of their social skills, the student survey on frequency of display of social skills was given. Tables 4, 5, and 6 show how the students' evaluated their behavior at the second, fourth and fifth grade levels.

Table 4 shows the responses second grade students made to the student survey at the beginning of the project and again at the end of the project. The results were not clear and may indicate that students at this age are not capable of reliable self-evaluation. The percentage of second grade students who responded, all the time, rose from the pre to post test in all areas except keeping hands to yourself. The largest improvement, 17%, was seen in listening skills. Other than the category, keeping hands to self, none of the students reported rarely or never in the posttest.

Table 4

Percent of Second Grade Students Responding to Surveys on Frequency of Social Skills Prior to and at the Conclusion of the Intervention

	All the time		Most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I listen to others while talking	57	74	30	26	9	0	4	0	0	0
I am nice to others	61	74	26	13	8	13	4	0	0	0
I share my equipment and ideas	65	78	30	17	4	4	0	0	0	0
I take responsibility for my actions	59	73	27	26	9	0	4	0	0	0
I keep my hands and feet to myself	60	60	17	30	17	4	4	4	0	0
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	65	74	17	26	17	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5

Percent of Fourth Grade Students Responding to Surveys on Frequency of Social Skills Prior to and at the Conclusion of the Intervention

	All the time		Most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I listen to others while talking	27	28	54	68	19	4	0	0	0	0
I am nice to others	35	24	50	56	12	16	4	0	0	4
I share my equipment and ideas	27	48	27	32	42	20	4	0	0	0
I take responsibility for my actions	27	42	46	42	23	16	4	0	0	0
I keep my hands and feet to myself	58	50	27	38	15	12	0	0	0	0
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	38	20	50	64	12	8	0	8	0	0

Table 5 shows the responses that fourth grade students made at the beginning of the study and again at the end of the study. There are several areas that show a decline in how well the students thought they were doing. Researchers felt that this could be due to the students having a greater understanding of what constituted the desired behavior after receiving instruction on those social skills. An example of this would be that at the beginning of the study 35% of the students felt they were nice all the time and only 24% felt that way at the end of the study. Students might have selected "most of the time"

after learning exactly what being nice to others meant. The frequency of responses declined in the category "keeping hands to self" and "paying attention."

Table 6

Percent of Fifth Grade Students Responding to Surveys on Frequency of Social Skills Prior to and at the Conclusion of the Intervention

	All the time		Most of the time		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I listen to others while talking	27	23	47	63	17	10	3	3	7	3
I am nice to others	60	30	27	63	13	4	0	2	0	0
I share my equipment and ideas	48	54	31	31	11	4	2	2	7	7
I take responsibility for my actions	53	40	43	50	3	3	0	0	0	7
I keep my hands and feet to myself	57	57	37	32	7	4	0	3	0	3
I pay attention when my teacher is speaking	40	37	37	47	17	7	0	0	7	10

Table 6 showed similar results to those of Table 5. The researchers agreed that the reasons for the declines in some areas could be because the students had a greater understanding of what constituted the desired behavior after the intervention. The fifth grade students could have had a better idea of what the survey was asking at the end of the study. The largest drop was 30% of students who no longer felt they were "nice all the time."

Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the teachers' observations of specified behaviors of second, fourth, and fifth grade students both at the beginning of the study and at the end.

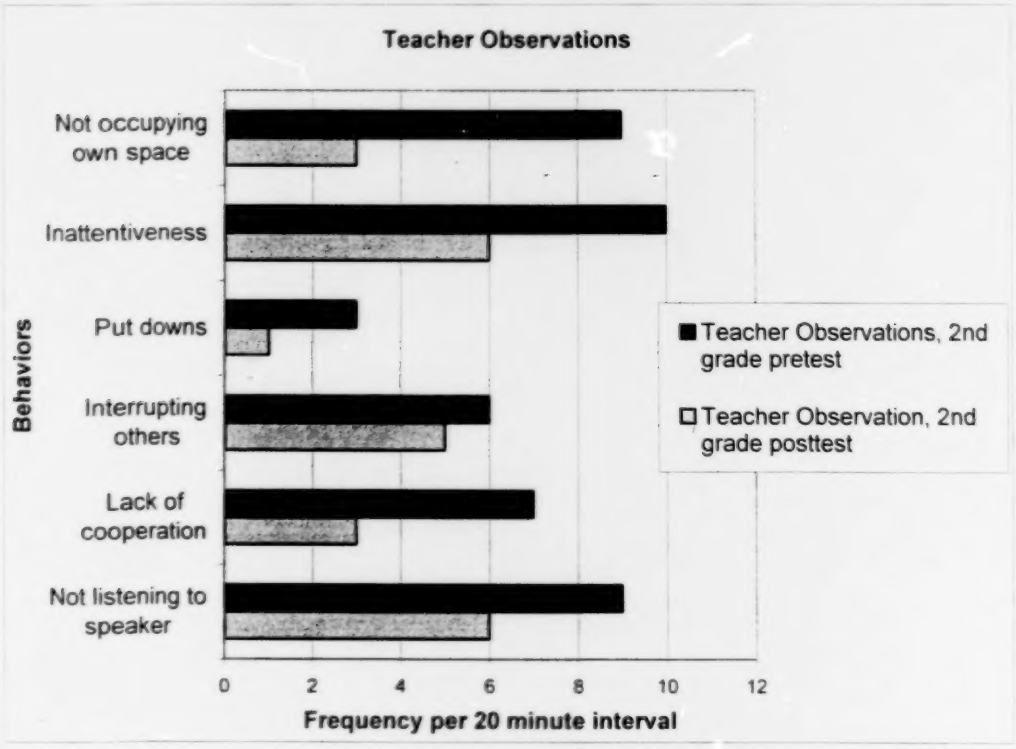

Figure 6. Teacher observation checklist of second grade students before and after the intervention.

At the second grade level the teacher observation survey showed a lack of desired behaviors, at the beginning of the project, such as not occupying own space, inattentiveness and not listening. After the intervention all of the behaviors improved. The students still exhibited some difficulty listening to the speaker and remaining attentive even though there was a slight improvement in those areas.

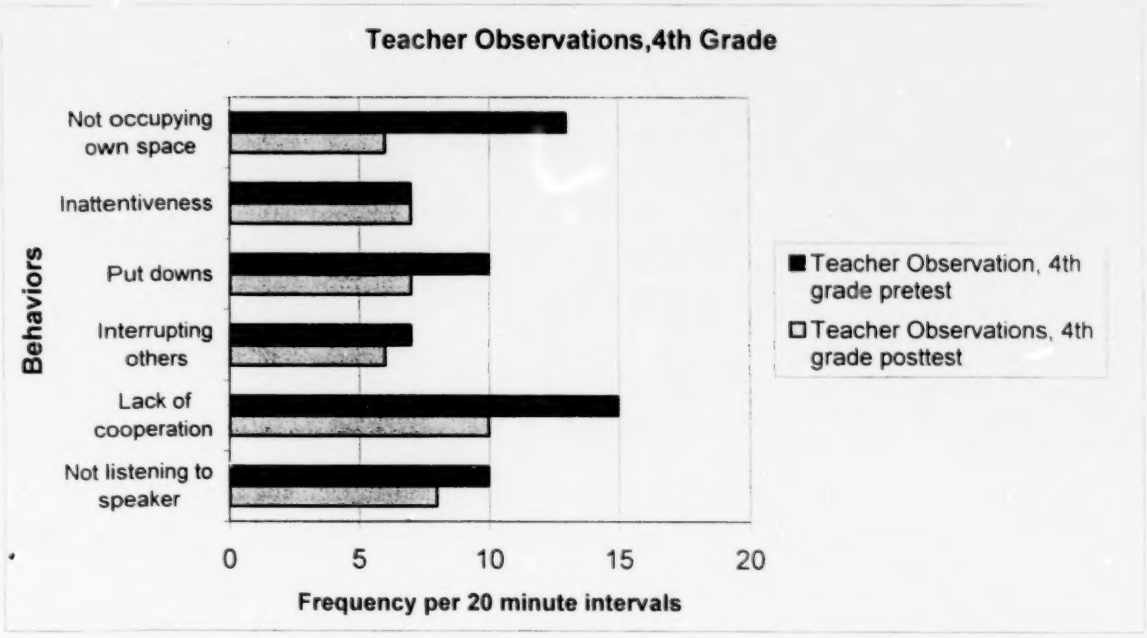

Figure 7. Teacher observation checklist of fourth grade students before and after the intervention.

Figure 7 shows slight improvement in some areas of skills. The students improved in occupying their own space as well as in cooperating with each other. The other areas showed little or no improvement. One explanation of this could be that the fourth grade students only met with their physical education teacher twice a week as compared to the second and fifth grade students who met with their physical education teachers daily. Possibly students need more frequent contact in order to show more improvement.

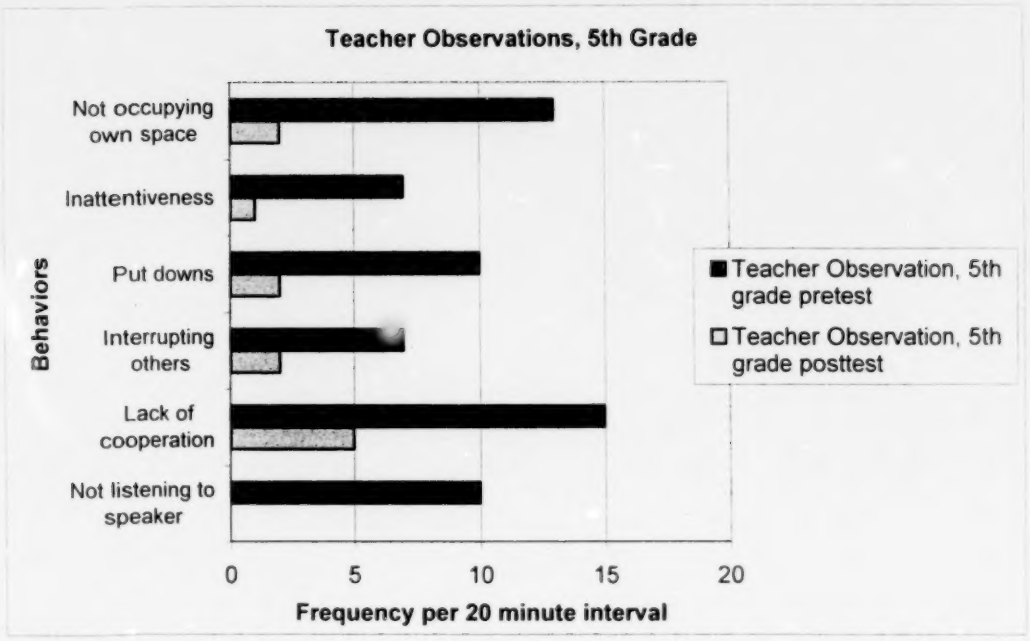

Figure 8. Teacher observation checklist of fifth grade students before and after the intervention.

The fifth grade targeted class showed marked improvement in all the areas observed. Their attentiveness, both listening and staying on task, improved greatly, as well as their cooperative skills. One of the interventions used with the fifth grade students was the adventure challenge. Because it incorporated many of these social skills, the adventure challenge could be a contributing factor in the positive results of the teacher observation checklist.

Figures 9, 10, and 11 show teacher journal entries of the three targeted classes both before and after the intervention.

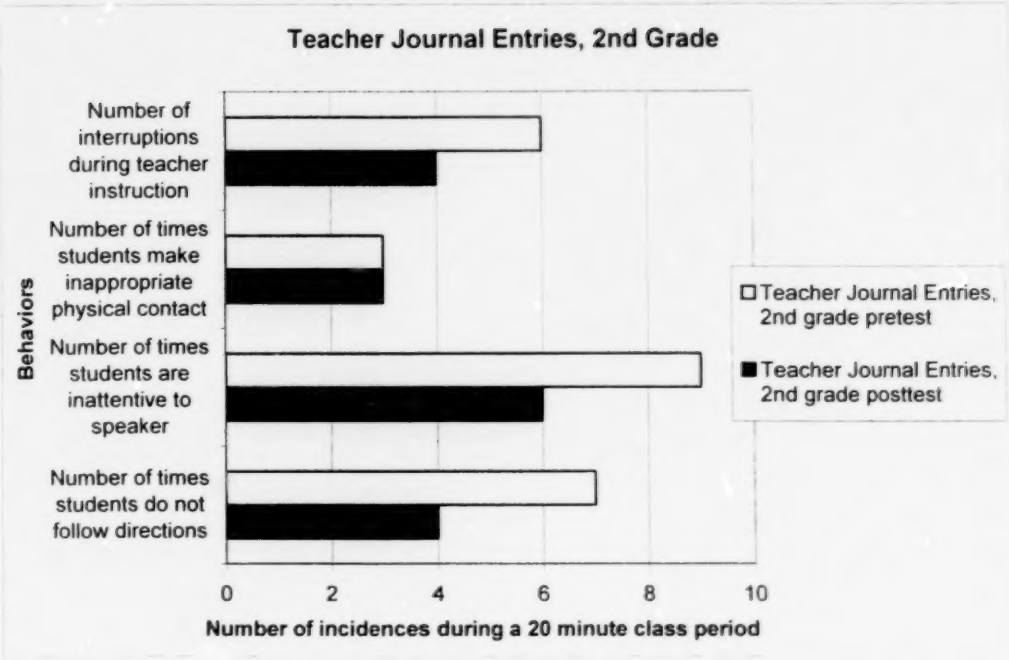
Teacher Journal Entries, 2nd Grade
Number of interruptions during teacher instruction
Number of times students make inappropriate physical contact
Number of times students are inattentive to speaker
Number of times students do not follow directions
Behaviors
Teacher Journal Entries, 2nd grade pretest
Teacher Journal Entries, 2nd grade posttest
0
2
4
6
8
10
Number of incidences during a 20 minute class period

Figure 9. Teacher journal entries of second grade students before and after the intervention.

Figure 9 shows some improvement in three of the four areas rated. Students' making inappropriate physical contact continued to remain a difficulty for second grade students. The second grade students showed fewer incidences of interrupting, being inattentive to speaker, and following directions. These results seem to imply that direct instruction of these social skills may have been effective.

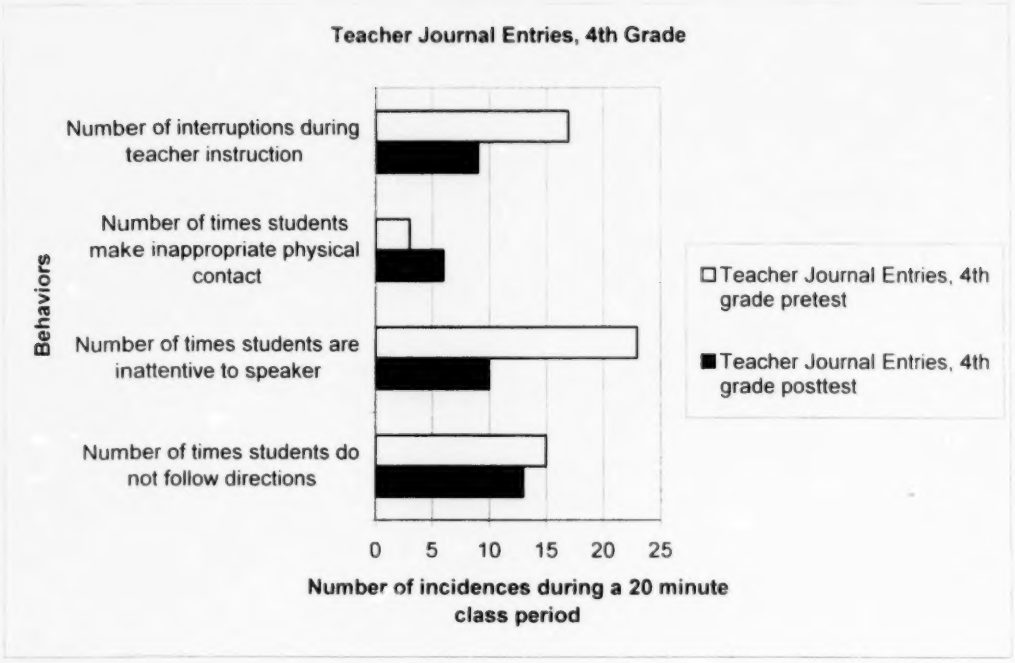
Teacher Journal Entries, 4th Grade
Number of interruptions during teacher instruction
Number of times students make inappropriate physical contact
Number of times students are inattentive to speaker
Number of times students do not follow directions
Behaviors
0
5
10
15
20
25
Number of incidences during a 20 minute class period
Teacher Journal Entries, 4th grade pretest
Teacher Journal Entries, 4th grade posttest

Figure 10. Teacher journal entries of fourth grade students before and after the intervention.

Figure 10 shows slight improvement in two areas with more substantial improvement in the number of times students were paying attention to the speaker. The students' behavior declined in the making inappropriate physical contact area. The fourth grade class continued to make less improvement, possibly because of the amount of time used to implement this project.

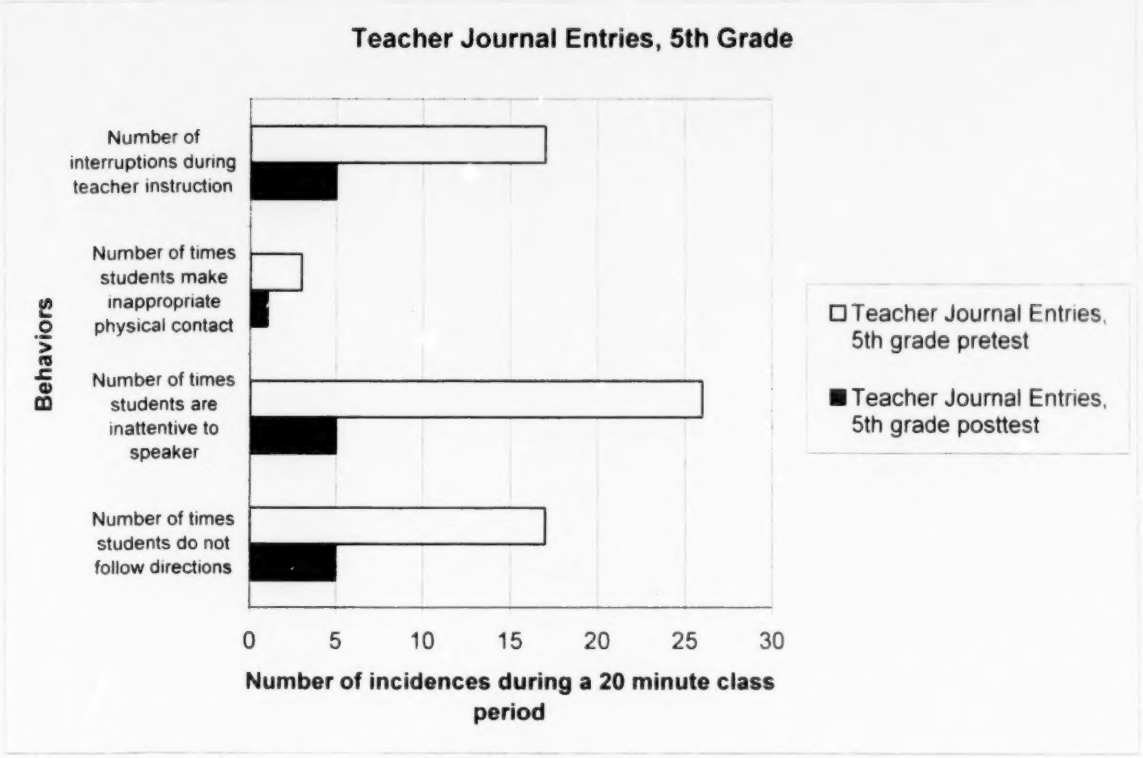
Teacher Journal Entries, 5th Grade
Number of interruptions during teacher instruction
Number of times students make inappropriate physical contact
Number of times students are inattentive to speaker
Number of times students do not follow directions
Behaviors
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
Number of incidences during a 20 minute class period
Teacher Journal Entries, 5th grade pretest
Teacher Journal Entries, 5th grade posttest

Figure 11. Teacher journal entries of fifth grade students before and after the intervention.

The fifth grade students showed improvement in all four areas rated. They interrupted less frequently and were more attentive to the speaker.

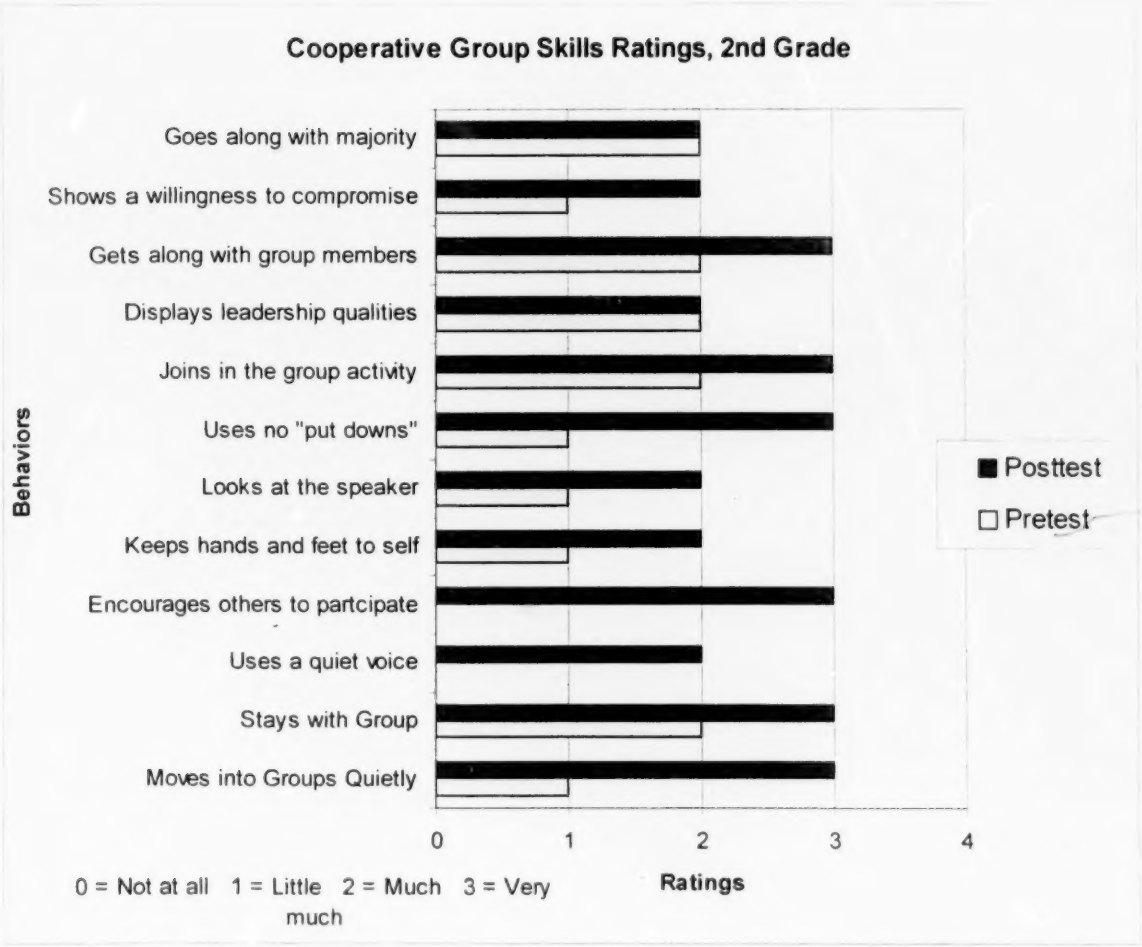

Figure 12. Cooperative group skills rating of second grade students before and after the intervention.

In the cooperative group skills rating chart, second grade improved in most areas with the exception of going along with the majority and displaying leadership qualities. One possible explanation for this could be the developmental stage of second graders. Encouraging others to participate showed a large improvement as well as encouraging less use of "put-downs." Direct instruction on how to be a member of a cooperative group seemed to help.

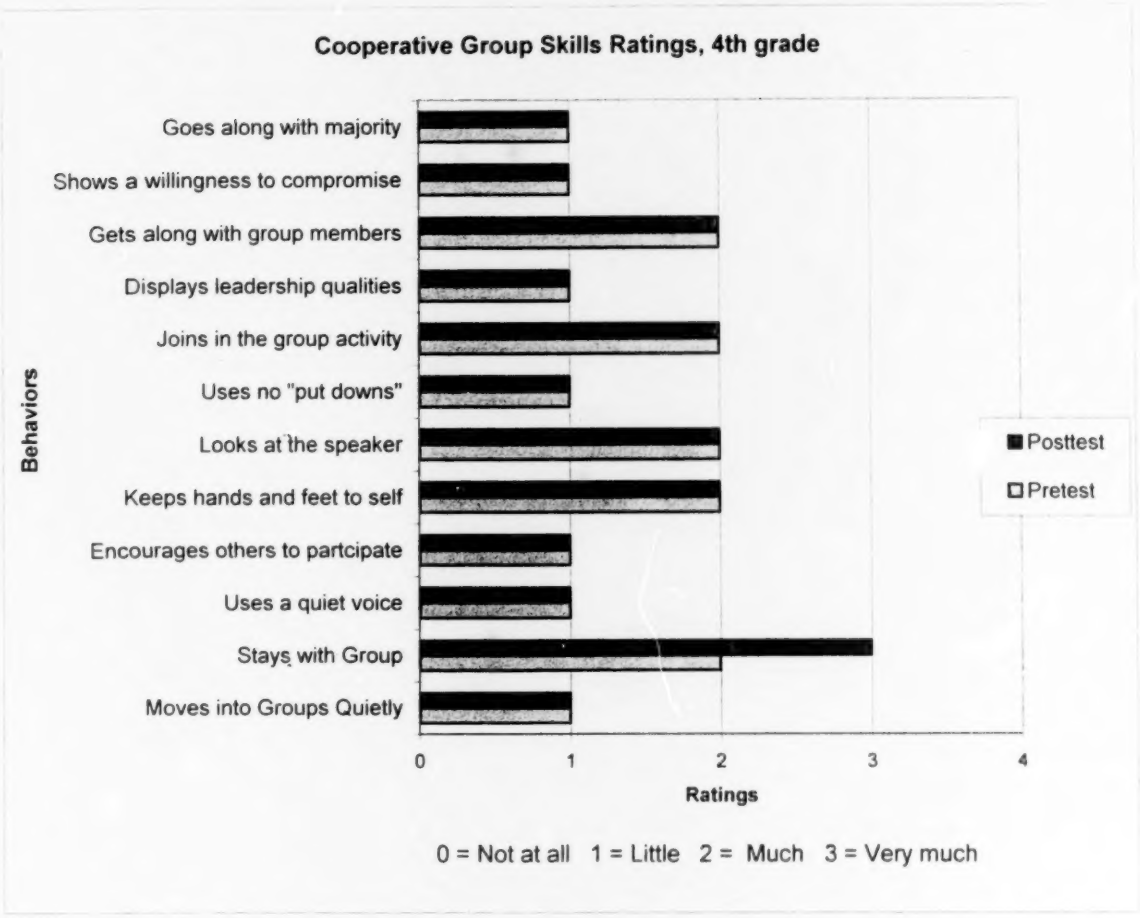

Figure 13. Cooperative group skills rating of fourth grade students before and after the intervention.

In the fourth grade ratings, most of the areas stayed the same. Staying with the group showed variation in rating because of the activities used in the pretest and posttest. A suggested reason for seeing so little improvement is that fourth grade students did not receive daily physical education and, therefore, had less teacher contact and fewer cooperative group lessons and practice time.

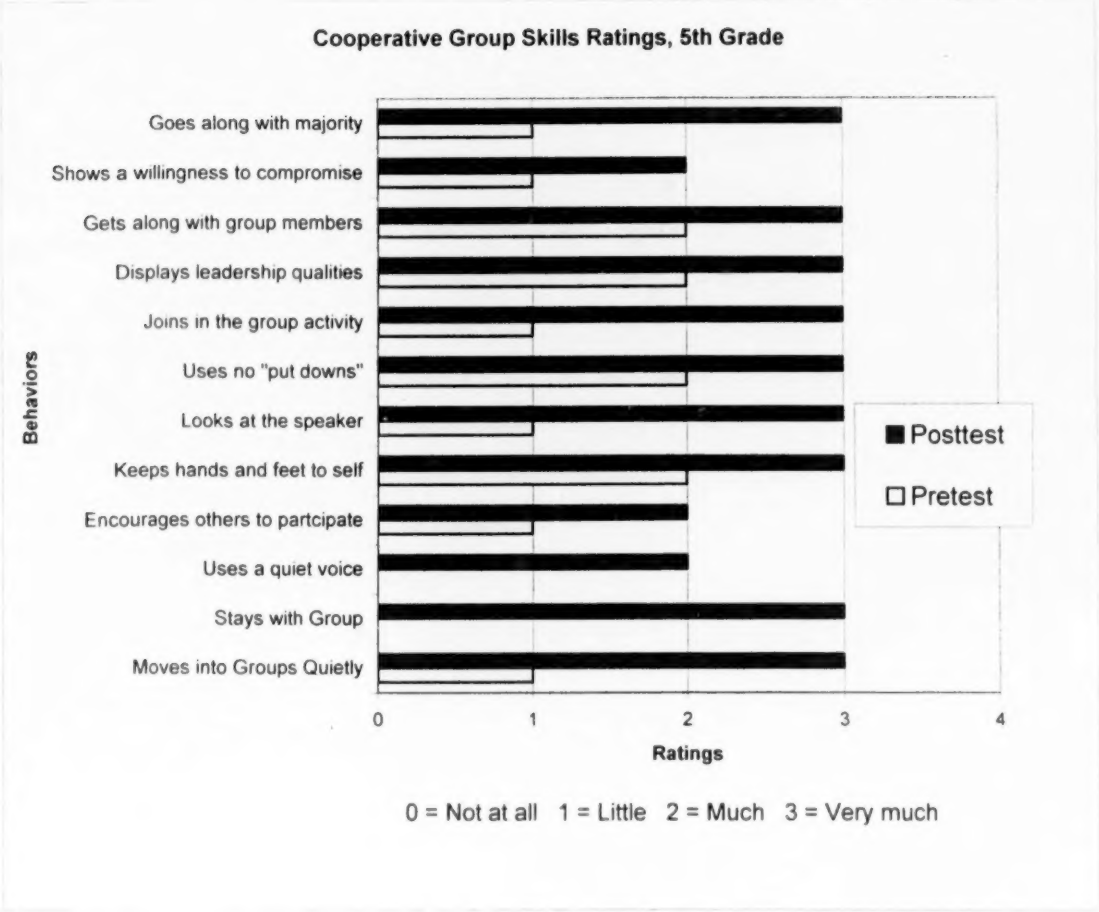

Figure 14. Cooperative group skills rating of fifth grade students before and after the intervention.

In the fifth grade all of the areas showed dramatic positive change. A team and cooperative challenge program clearly influenced the behavior of the students in a positive and productive way. The fifth grade students demonstrated a 'very much' rating in nine out of the twelve areas rated.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the development of social skills in the targeted second, fourth and fifth grade physical education classes, the researchers found that the students did show modest improvement in their behavior. The social skills learned during the cooperative learning activity lessons seemed to show the most improvement, especially in grades two and five. One possible reason for greater improvement in the second and fifth grades was due to the amount of time the teachers in those grades had contact with the students. The second and fifth grade teachers met with their students five days a week and the fourth grade teacher met with her students only twice a week. Both the fourth and fifth grade classes included in the study were difficult to manage because of the group dynamics. The fifth grade teacher reported a more positive classroom atmosphere than the fourth grade teacher as the study progressed. Daily physical education seemed to produce more positive influences upon classroom management and group dynamics.

The researchers agreed that daily physical education and the teaching of social skills did seem to make a difference in the behavior of targeted students. The researchers felt that two days a week of instruction might not be enough time to change behavior. When social skills were taught consistently, researchers found that students could apply what they learned to new situations.

Cooperative group activities were used as the intervention to improve cooperative skills. By comparing the pretests and posttests of the cooperative group skills ratings, some improvement in all areas could be seen at the second and fifth grade levels. At the second grade level encouraging others to participate, using a quiet voice, and using no put

downs improved a great deal. At the fifth grade level all areas showed dramatic improvement. It is interesting to note that at the fourth grade level only one item on the cooperative group skills ratings chart showed improvement, the other 11 items remained the same. This could possibly be due to the limited student and teacher contact at that grade level. It appeared that at the second and fifth grade levels the lessons on team challenges, cooperative activities, cooperative group roles, and encouraging others made positive differences in the targeted behaviors.

The researchers agreed that the direct instruction of listening skills could have contributed to improved listening skills in the students. The teacher observation checklists showed an improvement in students' listening to the teacher at all three grade levels studied. The teacher journal entries also reflected an improvement in the number of times students were inattentive to the speaker at all three grade levels.

The direct instruction and practice of manners worked well at the second grade level. The contrived use of manners was enjoyable for the younger children while the older students thought it served little purpose. Teacher acknowledgment of proper use of manners in groups and as individuals worked better with the older students. Much of this improvement could be seen in the cooperative group skills checklist. At the second and fifth grade level the improvement in manners was evident in the increase in positive behavior while working in cooperative groups. Items such as "displays leadership qualities," "uses no put downs," and "encourages others to participate" improved.

The student surveys did not seem to be very helpful. Possibly the targeted students were too young to be able to evaluate their own behavior with any degree of accuracy. With older students, this type of measuring device might be more useful. The

teacher observation checklist was difficult to implement because many of the categories were similar and not specific. The teacher journal was easier to administer because it was more specific.

Researchers agreed that implementation of this action research project had an effect on how the researchers taught and handled conflicts, and on their attitudes towards their students. Focusing on teaching social skills improved the researchers teaching strategies as well as helped them to be more successful motivating students and creating a positive learning environment.

The researchers recommend daily student contact when teaching social skills. The value of teaching social skills impacts the students as well as the teachers because of the positive classroom climate it creates.

It appeared to the researchers that physical education class was an appropriate subject area in which to teach social skills. There were many opportunities in physical education class for cooperative activities, social contact, and team activities. The direct instruction of selected social skills and cooperative learning strategies in physical education class may have resulted in many positive and productive outcomes. The researchers,strongly believed that implementation of this action research project was beneficial to their students, the classroom climate and the researchers' own teaching strategies.

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Appendix A

STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

Answer the following questions.
Circle your answer

1. I listen when other people are talking.

All the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

2. I am nice to others.

All the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

3. I share my equipment and ideas.

All the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

4. I take responsibility for my actions.

All the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

5. I keep my hands and feet to myself.

All the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

6. I pay attention when my teacher is speaking.

All of the time most of the time sometimes rarely never

Appendix B

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

DATE:_____

Not listening to the speaker	Lack of cooperation
Not occupying own space	Putting down others
Interrupting others	Inattentiveness

Appendix C

TEACHER JOURNAL ENTRIES

DATE_____

Number of interruptions During teacher instructions.	

Number of times students make inappropriate physical contact with each other.	

Number of times students are inattentive to speaker. (active listening posture)	

Number of times students don't follow the directions.	

Appendix D

COOPERATIVE GROUP SKILLS CHECKLIST

BEHAVIOR RATING

	0	1	2	3
Moves into groups quietly				
Stays with group				
Uses a quiet voice				
Encourages others to participate				
Keeps hands and feet to self				
Looks at the speaker				
Uses no "put downs"				
Joins in the group activity				
Displays leadership qualities				
Gets along with group members				
Shows a willingness to compromise				
Goes along with the majority				
0 = not at all 1 = just a little 2 = pretty much 3 = very much				